

*Why We Need. . .*

## WHY DO WE NEED THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDITH STEIN?

• Mette Lebech •

“The science of the Cross involves the subject to the point of its own annihilation and abandonment into the meaning of being. The paradox is that this abandonment represents a foundation for knowledge.”



It is a complex issue, *need*. How does one know what one needs? When we justify why we act and want and write the way we do, we often do so with reference to a need for something. That there is a legitimate recognized need for something makes a convincing argument. “Why do we need the philosophy of Edith Stein?” is a question asking for reasons as to why we should read Stein’s philosophy and spend time to come to know her work. It asks for the motives of her thought, for what is at stake in her philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Stein is known primarily as a martyr and saint.<sup>2</sup> That Stein’s

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<sup>1</sup>I owe thanks to Prof. William Desmond, Dr. Haydn Gurmin, and Dr. Marianne Sawicki for many helpful comments on a previous draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup>Recent years, however, have seen a growing number of publications on Stein’s philosophy. They have also seen the near completion of the superb critical edition of her works (*Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe* [ESGA]), as well as translations into several languages: English (ICS Publications, Washington, D.C.), Italian, Spanish, Polish,

saintliness has obscured her philosophy is partly due to the fact that saintliness of life perhaps *is* more important than the products of intellectual activity, but it is probably also due to the difficulty of her works and to the fact that she is a woman. Why would she need to write something so demanding, and why should we need to put in such effort to read it? Why would it not be enough for her to be a lovely woman and a saint? Why do we need her philosophy *as well*?

### *Need*

We seem to know about need from three sources:

1. From our inner experience, from sensations we have learned to identify as warning signs of mental or physical breakdown, from suffering, related as it is to desire and inclination without being exactly identical to these.

2. We know of need from the experience of others who we see suffer, threaten to break down, or become maimed, spiritually, psychologically, or physiologically.

3. And we know of need from what it is, its essence, in terms of which we know what pertains to it as such. It is not exactly pain or desire, for example, but it seems to involve both in some way. It seems to signify the threat of destruction of an organism, a mind, or

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Slovakian, and French. For secondary literature in English, see John Haydn Gurmin and Liz Meade's "List of Secondary Philosophical Sources in English" available on the website of the *International Association for the Study of the Philosophy of Edith Stein* (IASPES) ([www.edithsteincircle.com](http://www.edithsteincircle.com)); also see there Rosalia Caruso's bibliography of works in Italian. Bibliographies of works in German, Polish and French are being prepared. The unity of Stein's philosophical purpose, the depth and honesty of her engagement with both contemporary and traditional thought, as well as her single-minded pursuit of meaning wherever it is found, deserve to be honored. Now that the Church has recognized Stein as a saint and a patroness of Europe, it might consider bestowing on her the title of Doctor of the Church. Stein does fit the criteria: she possesses *insignis vitae sanctitas*; she teaches, as I hope to show in the following, an *eminens doctrina*; only the *ecclesiae declaratio* would seem then to be lacking. Although no martyr has been declared doctor, perhaps because martyrs are *ipso facto* teachers of the Christian faith, giving the title to Stein would recognize her outstanding contribution to contemporary philosophy and its development, and perhaps help the world appreciate this contribution. Her title surely would be *doctressa scientiae crucis*.

a complex whole, felt from the inside as the craving of the unity threatened. Or it signifies simply that which a whole requires in order to be whole, the imperfection of a being the essence of which is imperfectly instantiated. Then need is understood in dependence on our understanding of the whole or the essence imperfectly instantiated.

From these sources we build an understanding of being in need, and only in terms of these can we evaluate what we, what other people, what tradition and public opinion hold about need, and about what *we* need, about what the human being needs. The proper identification of need is thus a key question for philosophical anthropology. Even more importantly it is a key question for ontology, as a proper evaluation of the fullness of being is available only when we can also discern lack.

Stein's own need to think was a need to face reality in all its dimensions, especially the personal and social ones. From her doctoral thesis *On the Problem of Empathy*<sup>3</sup> onwards, she systematically explored the intersubjective constitution of the world and its negotiation of *being*, without which this constitution comes to nothing: we all relate to the world in terms of what it *is*. Stein's need to clarify her thinking in the midst of this negotiation in dialogue with others made her write it down.

This need had specific dimensions, which constituted Stein in all her completeness as a person. In commenting on a draft of this article Marianne Sawicki aptly characterized these as follows:

It seems to me that her [Stein's] evolving needs went from broad and grand, to narrow and deep:

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<sup>3</sup>*On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Herbstrith (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1986). *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, ESGA 5, Herder, 2008. An earlier (incomplete) Herder edition exists (the "Yellow Edition"), *Edith Steins Werke* (ESW), which has been replaced by the critical ESGA. As it happens *On the Problem of Empathy* (1916), *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (1922), and *An Investigation Concerning the State* (1925) were not available in the old edition. The two latter were published by Niemeyer in 1970. *Introduction to Philosophy* (1918–20) was available only in a confused state. Thus Stein's four earliest works, written before her baptism, were relatively unavailable in German until very recently. English translations of many of Stein's works exist in the *Collected Works of Edith Stein* (CWES), published by ICS Publications in Washington, who decided recently to start translating from the new critical edition, though some follow-up work on the previously published volumes remains.

- [a] to found the sciences and the humanities on a single unified insight
- [b] to have a career [...]
- [c] to repair the German state
- [d] to develop a theory of women's education
- [e] to find meaning in the dearth of meaning around her
- [f] to identify the principle of the unity of humanity
- [g] to find a home and be at home there

The inner logic of these needs permits us to reduce them to three:

1. to unfold and contribute (to phenomenology and philosophy theoretically and practically [a–b]);
2. to understand why this need was frustrated (why the German state veered toward totalitarianism, why women were discriminated against for philosophical careers, and why people desiring to counteract these were not effective [c–e]);
3. to find a way to unfold and contribute despite failure, rejection, and persecution (to find salvation through forgiveness and solidarity with all and to be at home through faith in the redemption achieved by Christ [f–g]).

Stein's philosophical development falls in fact into three periods, which may each be seen as determined by these progressively developing needs. The early period is characterized by a critical development of phenomenology to analyze socially constructed phenomena. It represents Stein's initial contribution to phenomenology. The middle period concentrates on anthropology and the translation of Christian thought and tradition into the philosophical idiom of phenomenology. It is characterized by new starts and a reassessment of the community to which she wanted to contribute. The later period is determined by a commitment to Christian philosophy and mysticism. Here Stein's home in Carmel allowed her to rely on Christian doctrine in her thinking.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>It is customary to regard the early period as ending with Stein's baptism. However, if we take the next period as characterized by the need to understand the forces that frustrated her need to participate, it would be natural to include her essay on the state in her second period (published in 1925, but written, at least in part, before her baptism in 1922), and see baptism as a step to counterbalance the frustration. Likewise, the middle period can be seen to end with her entering the Carmel in Cologne, but her twin works on the human person (*Structure of the Human Person* and *What is the Human Being?*) were written while she was still in

By following the development of her philosophy we shall trace the inner contours of her life, the path she had to follow. As her philosophy engages with phenomenology, fundamental psychology, social philosophy, epistemology, anthropology, ontology, and mysticism, it reflects the mindscapes she went through to get to *the things themselves*.

*Stein's approach to philosophy*

It is in fact the attempt to get to *the things themselves* that characterizes her approach in its entirety. Stein was a phenomenologist: she saw the starting point for philosophical inquiry in experience, and she regarded this starting point as indispensable. Her emphasis on empathy allows us to comprehend how our experience influences that of others, how in turn it itself is influenced by their experience, and how intersubjectivity, as a consequence, is structured and “socially constructs” the world in which we live. Understanding the structure of intersubjectivity as it builds our social world and informs our perceptions of the natural world sets us free to look at our own judging about what and how things are.<sup>5</sup> It allows us to see our own motivations<sup>6</sup> and those of others, see how they occasion our communities and institutions and to look back at the needs and

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Münster, and these explain her commitment to Christian philosophy. Thus, while baptism and the entry into Carmel mark Stein's development, they are also prepared by it and by the evolving needs that carve out and explain this development. Both events provide new direction as Stein chooses a new set of conditions to which to adapt. For an updated version of Marianne Sawicki's chronology of Stein's works, please consult the IASPES website.

<sup>5</sup>See *Einführung in die Philosophie*, ESGA 8, pp. 69–100 (I, c, 5–17) and our discussion of this work in what follows.

<sup>6</sup>The phenomenological investigation of motivation is not exclusive to Stein. Alexander Pfänder wrote a phenomenology of willing and motivation (*Phenomenology of Willing and Motivation and Other Phenomenologica*, trans. and ed. Herbert Spiegelberg, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, 1967 (translated from *Phenomenologie des Willens: Eine psychologische Analyse*, 1900), which extensively influenced Paul Ricoeur's *Philosophie de la volonté* I–II. That the notion is so important for Stein shows the influence the Munich phenomenology had on her. The idea of motivation remained relatively foreign to Husserl, who associated it with the psychologism he suspected in the Munich tradition.

nature of the human being as the explanation of these motivations and of the socially constructed world. As there is no erasing of one's own perspective, there is no practical possibility of not judging about existence in the most ordinary of ways.<sup>7</sup> This practical impossibility makes up the necessity of *ontic* and *eidetic* analyses, i.e. analyses of what things are or appear to be and of the essence of those things. At the heart of intersubjective, personal experience thus lies being; controversial or shared, meaningful and valuable; turning toward it implies an intelligent openness beyond prejudice toward that which appears. Stein grounded her thinking in personal life and also tested it there. She understood this personal experience to be shareable insofar as it can be understood. She encouraged her readers to examine this same experience (the personal and the shared) to test the plausibility of what she says, with attention to experience disciplined by the adoption of the phenomenological attitude.

Sometimes Stein's spirit of collaboration is mistaken for lack of originality. To Stein, learning is part of the human condition, and it obliges us to attempt to penetrate what others say in order to get to "the things themselves." Thus she thinks *with* and *with the help of* other thinkers, in a manner that renders her style of criticism and her hermeneutic practices recognizable. These practices, however, must not be taken for dependency on others' thought, as Stein mostly criticizes by *improving*, i.e., by providing an interpretation of the thinking at hand that lends itself to understand better the subject under investigation (as distinct from obscuring it). This means that she sometimes prolongs the thinking according to its own principles over and above what it achieved by itself, so that her criticism is literally constructive. Her corrective completions of Husserl, Scheler, Aquinas, Aristotle, Conrad-Martius, Pseudo-Dionysius, and John of

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<sup>7</sup>"What lovely weather it is today!"; "It is dinner time!"; "That'll be seven euro fifty." The very form of judgment involves the "is" or can be translated into a statement that does. This argument is made by Hedwig Conrad-Martius: *Das Sein* (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1957). This work relies on unpublished material from the thirties, and thus probably reflects Conrad-Martius' thought as Stein was exposed to it. The two were friends, Conrad-Martius became Stein's godmother, and they remained in philosophical exchange throughout Stein's life. Joachim Feldes has done much to unearth the Bergzabern Circle of phenomenologists, to which they both belonged in the twenties. See, for example, his contribution to the proceedings of the IASPES International Conference *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being. Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, ed. Haydn Gurmin and Mette Lebech (Traugot-Bautz, libri nigri, forthcoming).

the Cross all exemplify this style. The criticism is always voiced, but because of its polite understatement and often highly complex nature, readers might not immediately identify it as critique at all.<sup>8</sup> Correcting Aristotle's concept of substance for its dependence on a flawed concept of matter, however,<sup>9</sup> or writing an entire missing treatise of Pseudo-Dionysius on symbolic theology to give balance to his work as it has been received in the Christian tradition,<sup>10</sup> nevertheless embodies substantial critiques of formative strands in European thought.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Stein characterizes, for example, her relationship to Husserl's thought in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* in the following manner: "A few words remain to be said to clarify the relation of my investigations to the work of Edmund Husserl. I've been helping Professor Husserl for nearly two years with the preparation of large publications. During this time, all his manuscripts from the last ten years have been at my disposal (among them those that have to do with the topic of psychology and the humanities as well). It goes without saying that important influences on my own work came out of the stimulation that I was receiving in this way and in many conversations. Today I myself no longer am able to keep track of the extent to which this has been the case. It just wasn't possible for me to give references through citation, because the material in question is unpublished [she is speaking in particular of *Ideas II* and *III*] and also because very often I was not sure whether I would have to regard something as my own research result or as an internal appropriation of transferred thought motifs." (Foreword). Stein thus acknowledges her philosophical kinship, but she also states that the material has become so familiar to her that she thinks out of it in her own manner. In fact, she takes Husserl's thought further.

<sup>9</sup>*Endliches und ewiges Sein*, ESGA 11/12, IV, §3, pp. 139–93.

<sup>10</sup>*Wege der Gotteserkenntnis. Die symbolische Theologie des Areopagiten und ihre sachlichen Voraussetzungen*, in *Wege der Gotteserkenntnis*, ESGA 17, pp. 22–77; CWES VIII (*Knowledge and Faith*), V, pp. 83–188.

<sup>11</sup>Marianne Sawicki has called this technique "chiselling" and "ventriloquism" (*Body Text and Science: The Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein* [Kluwer, 1996], ch. 4). Sawicki thus identifies in negative terms the method we here identify as "literally constructive." Whether one values the method positively or negatively, Stein's interpretations are to be found as part of a systematic whole, so that they become fully comprehensible only when seen as part of her own project as a systematic philosopher. Stein says the following about the method she as a philosopher sees herself obliged to follow: "The philosopher must not only attempt to see and show the *fact* that someone went about it in such and such a way; his insight must not only extend to the connections between the other's grounds [*Grund*] and consequences. The philosopher must also *grasp why* his predecessor went about it like this. He must get down to the grounds themselves and grasp *them*. And this means that the grounds must grip him and best him in the

In what follows we shall treat of the early period more in depth in order to bring out the complexity of the foundation for Stein's later philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

### I. Early writings<sup>13</sup>

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sense that he decides to accept them and retraces *within himself* the path the other followed from grounds to conclusions, perhaps even going beyond him. Or else he must best the *grounds*; I mean, he must decide to get free of them and take another path" (*Potency and Act* [CWES], Foreword, pp. 2–3. ESGA 10, p. 4). In the opposite direction it also means that the interpretation present in her work for others (editions and translations, ghost-writings and corrections) often forms an indispensable part of her own thought process, and hence is explanatory of her systematic directions. The commented translations and editions (Reinach's *Gesammelte Werke*, Husserl's *Ideas II* and *III*, Aquinas' *De Veritate* and the *Works of Pseudo-Dionysius*) and also the commented anthology of dogmatic declarations *Was ist der Mensch?* often contain the keys to major shifts in her own thinking. That such shifts take place when engaged with the thought of others is, arguably, a common experience. It means, however, that what is presented as editions and translations must be read as one reads commentaries, as this is what they are. The idea that Stein abandoned phenomenology for Thomism underestimates the scope of the *Auseinandersetzung* between the two traditions carried out in *The Structure of the Human Being*, *Potency and Act*, and in *Finite and Eternal Being*.

<sup>12</sup>In fact, if one begins with the later, distinctly Christian, work one can easily miss out on both its profundity and its modernity. This is not to say that the early work is more important than the later, or that it stands in contrast with it. But it is difficult to understand the later work without understanding it as reflecting Stein's lifelong involvement with phenomenology, or to understand the depth of Stein's early work unless one sees it as reflecting her relentless quest for the meaning of being. The unity of Stein's work is not only testified to by recurrent themes (the human being, education, community, and meaning) but also by the fact that Stein does not retract anything said in the earlier works, but rather refers to them in her later work. In *Potency and Act*, for example, she refers to *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* to explain the concept of *Lebenskraft* (ESGA, 10 p. 222). Stein also never repeats herself, but presupposes earlier work, to the point of never concluding by reiterating the results. Many other narratives describing the inner progression of her thought have informed mine (in particular those of Herbstrith, Baseheart, Gerl-Falkovitz, Sawicki, Borden, and MacIntyre).

<sup>13</sup>We include in this period Stein's four major works in phenomenology: *On the Problem of Empathy* (ESGA 5), *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (ESGA 6), *Introduction to Philosophy* (ESGA 8), and *An Investigation concerning the State* (ESGA 7). The translation (undertaken with Hedwig Conrad-Martius) of Alexandre

It is well known that Stein left Breslau for Göttingen to study with Edmund Husserl and wrote her doctoral dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy* under his supervision.<sup>14</sup> The period of their relationship that followed her *viva* in 1916 is not as easily known. The philosophical story is complicated by the interconnectedness of Husserl's *Ideas II* and *III*, edited by Stein, and her own *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, which she wrote in order to complement *Ideas II* and *III*. This interconnection has still not been sufficiently explored. Nor have the consequences of this interaction been drawn out fully in phenomenological research into the issues debated in those works: the foundation of intersubjectivity, the role of the body, the constitution of the social world, and the foundation of psychology and the human sciences.<sup>15</sup> Stein ends her autobiogra-

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Koyré's *Descartes und die Scholastik* (ESGA 25) also pertains to this period, as does Stein's edition of Reinach's *Gesammelte Schriften*.

<sup>14</sup>She states as much herself in the autobiography *Life in a Jewish Family*, CWES 1, V, 5, p. 217ff: *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie*, ESGA 1, p. 169ff.

<sup>15</sup>Marianne Sawicki's *Body Text and Science* has ventured a version of events and has studied the manuscripts thoroughly in chapter 2 with a view to discern Stein's role in the edition of *Ideas II*. Sawicki relies for her analysis on the thesis that Stein's additions contain the understanding that the body lies before constitution, something the present author cannot consider warranted by Stein's other writings. (See my "Stein's Phenomenology of the Body. Between Description of Experience and Social Construction," *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society*, ed. Fiacra Long [2008]: 61–70). Stein's constitutional analysis of the body in Chapter III of *On the Problem of Empathy* shows precisely how the body is constituted from experience. That our constitution of the body is the most adequate identification of our experience is hard to deny, and in this sense one can of course claim that the body is "before" experience—in the same sense, in this case then, as everything else: the body could not have among constituted things a status different from theirs, except as embodying an I of which I know by the means of empathy. Empathy and constitution are not on the same level, however: empathy is an *act*, constitution the *function* of the I. Constitution happens through acts, not before or after them. As Stein is keen to adhere to the method of transcendental phenomenology and explains her method in terms of it in both *On the Problem of Empathy* (ESGA 5, pp. 11–14 [1–4]; II, §1) and *Einführung in die Philosophie* (ESGA 8, *Einleitung*), she would not want to regard the body as prior to constitution, even when she writes for Husserl, as she also would not understand him to want to write that (taking the body as prior to constitution would to both amount to dogmatism). To identify the sections written by Stein as characterized by this thesis is therefore to my mind questionable. That Stein did attempt to bring Husserl's fragments into cohesion, and that she did substantially edit precisely to avoid a contradiction between

phy with the defence of her doctoral thesis.<sup>16</sup> But we must attempt a version of the events that followed to understand where she went from there.

When Stein accepted the position as Husserl's assistant, she burned with enthusiasm for the project that he stood for: the founding of Phenomenology as a universal science. He envisaged that providing phenomenological analyses of the formal objects of the sciences would allow for investigations into every field of knowledge, which would thus become securely based and as a consequence pseudo-science could be discarded. Stein understood this to be of indisputable value because it would help us unify our efforts toward knowing and understanding reality as a whole and thus aid humanity's progress. Insofar as Husserl's project was identical with this goal, she could fulfill her own ambition by helping him publish his contributions toward its realization.

Stein had already been convinced, however, that the missing link between subjectivity and intersubjectivity (which was indispensable for understanding how one accedes to the objectivity required by scientific understanding) had not been sufficiently investigated by Husserl.<sup>17</sup> This was the reason she had written her doctoral disserta-

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considering on the one hand the body as pre-given to constitution and therefore unfailingly embodying foreign subjectivity, and on the other the perspective of the other accessed by the means of empathy *as part of* the constitution of the body of the other, cannot be denied. What that shows, however, is just that the text was not thought through sufficiently. It was this that frustrated Stein, because it revealed that the act of empathy also was not sufficiently thought through in its consequences by Husserl. Insofar as Sawicki regards empathy as a function, and not as an act, however, she goes directly against Stein's formulation of Chapter II (which is entitled *The Essence of the Act of Empathy*), where she explicitly compares empathy to other acts in order to circumscribe its essence. Her intent seems to be to safeguard the independence and irreducible nature of the spiritual, which is infelt. This independence is, as far as I can see, manifest in the objectivity of the values motivating experience. And motivation is not an act, but "the connection acts get into with one another: (...) an emerging of one out of the other, a self-fulfilling or being fulfilled of the one on the basis of the other, for the sake of the other" (*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, I, III, §1, p. 39). It is thus closer to being on the same level as constitution than empathy is. Motivation is not a, or *the*, function of the I, as constitution is, but rather seems to affect the constitution in an observable manner (*ibid.*).

<sup>16</sup>*Life in a Jewish Family*, CWES, p. 414; ESGA 1, p. 343.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 269. ESGA 1, pp. 218–9.

tion on empathy, the act in which foreign experience is experienced, and in which intersubjective experience as a consequence is anchored.<sup>18</sup> In this dissertation she explored the way in which empathy allows us to constitute not only the world but also ourselves as objective for others, as it allows us to constitute the I as different from other I's, and as experienced by these. This I is incarnated in a body, which is like that of others', and which we learn to identify in a process involving the other, and the body of the other, as schema or mirror. The I is also experiencing itself as a person, i.e., as motivated by a value-world spiritually accessible to all persons, and from these I also learn about this world of values.<sup>19</sup> Stein had thus contended that empathy is crucial for understanding the constitution of ourselves not only as psycho-physical individuals but also as human persons.<sup>20</sup>

Stein did not, in contrast with Husserl, understand "constitution," the function or activity of the I in which it manifests itself, to be experienced by us as unmotivated.<sup>21</sup> That is, the full constitu-

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<sup>18</sup>"All these data of foreign experience point back to the basic nature of acts in which foreign experience is comprehended. We now want to designate these as acts of empathy, regardless of all historical traditions attached to the word. To grasp and describe these acts in the greatest essential generality will be our first undertaking" (*On the Problem of Empathy II*, §1, p. 6 [CWES]; ESGA 5, pp. 13–14).

<sup>19</sup>*On the Problem of Empathy*, Chapter IV. The emphasis on motivation as the function specific to the person, and the spiritual content of the empathized is specific to Stein. Although Husserl followed this in principle, he did not see the systematic connections that Stein here makes with the clarity she did. He, for example, does not think the person is the subject of motivation in the same way the I is the subject of constitution. Nor does he see the difference between the spiritual and natural components of the human person with the same clarity as Stein does. This is going to be the issue between them, when Stein edits *Ideas II* and *III*. On the background of the clarity gained in *On the Problem of Empathy*, *Ideas II* would appear to Stein as in need of revision in many places for the sake of a clarity it does not quite achieve.

<sup>20</sup>She had in other words claimed that we already rely on empathy in order to identify ourselves as *an I*, i.e., not as "I," which requires simply the constitution of the pole of all primordial experience, but as *an I*, which knows itself as such, i.e., as such a pole (of which, by the very fact that it can be conceptualized by a universal term, there can be several). There can only be an instance of something if there can be more instances. Otherwise there would be no instance in the first place, and no need to use the indefinite article. See *On the Problem of Empathy III*, 1, p. 38; ESGA 5, p. 41).

<sup>21</sup>*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, I, III, §1, p. 39; ESGA 6, p. 35;

tion of an object as such is motivated in the sense that its unity or essence provides the reason for its constitution.<sup>22</sup> As it is the experience of motivation that allows us to constitute the person, and the I as a person insofar as it is motivated in its constitution, we constitute I's as persons when we experience them as free.<sup>23</sup> To the extent that Husserl sees the person as part of the *empirical* I (distinct from the transcendental I), in Stein's view he is dividing the transcendental sphere, leaving the unmotivated activity of the I as the only sphere of phenomenological investigation. As a result the sphere becomes incomprehensible.<sup>24</sup> Stein thus understood Husserl's

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Niemeyer, p. 34. The term "constitution" is central to phenomenology and means as much as "identification." "Motivation, in our general sense, is the connection that acts get into with one another: (...) an emerging of the one out of the other, a self-fulfilling or being fulfilled of the one on the basis of the other for the sake of the other" (*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, p. 41). Whether one could call motivation a "function" parallel to the function of constitution is a question on which more work ought to be done, as indeed in general on the concept of motivation in Stein and its ramifications into empathy and the objective and subjective spiritual worlds. Motivation can be followed, and therefore it is the sign of the specifically spiritual: Stein calls it the law of the spiritual world in the same sense causality is the law of the natural world. In nature there is nothing to be infelt, nothing one can follow: causality has no "inside" what one understands when one realizes it is external and is factual. When one understands a logical connection or a spiritual *Zusammenhang* one understands inner connections, which often are not "visible" in the physical world. In *Personal Connections*, Sawicki designates motivation as "the valence or inclination of the current of experience to flow forward from one active experience into the next. (...) Motivation is optional, causation is necessary. (...) It feels different to follow a causal connection than a motivational connection. We cannot feel-into a causal connection. It is opaque to the ego. We know it from outside. By contrast, a motivational connection is in-feel-able. The passage from act to motivated act is something that I can let myself vicariously ride through. It registers inwardly with me. That means, the way in which a motivated coherence appears to me exhibits, as a primal feature, its quality of having originated in another's choice. Choices let me in: I re-live them, I understand them empathically. Causes, I can only stand outside of and observe" ([www.library.nd.edu/colldev/subject\\_home\\_pages/catholic/personal\\_connections.shtml](http://www.library.nd.edu/colldev/subject_home_pages/catholic/personal_connections.shtml), accessed 14 December 2011).

<sup>22</sup>We see the object as one because we are motivated by the value of its oneness.

<sup>23</sup>*On the Problem of Empathy*, IV, 1–2.

<sup>24</sup>Edmund Husserl: *Ideen II*, § 49, p. 184, l. 5ff. *Ideen II (Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. Rojcevicz and Schuwer [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989]) makes the distinction between a naturalistic and a personalistic attitude, which accounts for the differences experienced in seeing the person and seeing

project of reducing experience to the sphere of the transcendental I to be impossible, and thought instead that the ultimate “ground” is *experience*. It is this experience that is transcendentalized by the reduction, and it is not reduced to the transcendental *I*, as experience teaches me in fact (and in principle insofar as objectivity is experienced) of several, indeed many, I’s, only one of which is mine. One could therefore contend that Stein was a realist phenomenologist *not* because she took the side of Reinach *against* Husserl, but because she stayed faithful to Husserl’s project, to which Reinach also was committed, and which attempts to reduce experience in order to investigate it *exactly* as it is experienced.<sup>25</sup> This experience includes the experience of the other as experienced by the I, the complex experience of constitution being motivated, and also the complex web of intersubjective constitution, which results from this overlay of diversely motivated perspectives.

### *Intersubjectivity*

As Stein continued her work for Husserl, she realized that Husserl did not fully grasp or acknowledge the far-reaching consequences of her criticism for the constitution of the world in its social dimensions and thus for the foundations of psychology and the humanities. He did not, despite Stein’s requests, further develop the understanding of empathy and the constitutional issues relating to it in his analysis of the constitution of nature and spirit (and between them the human body and soul) in *Ideas II* and *III*.<sup>26</sup> As Stein edited the manuscripts and attempted to make Husserl help her rewrite his

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things. Both of these are again distinct from the phenomenological attitude. Stein distinguishes only between the natural and the phenomenological attitude, and understands the person to be constituted from its involvement with the lawfulness of the spiritual world, motivation. To her it is empathy that allows us to identify other subjects of experience, some of which are also subjects of motivation (persons). There is thus no need for a personalistic attitude, or, as we can also say, the natural attitude involving empathy *is* the personalistic attitude.

<sup>25</sup>This would imply the practical compatibility of transcendental and realist phenomenology, in the same way as Stein maintains the practical compatibility of realism and idealism in *Introduction to Philosophy* (see below).

<sup>26</sup>He did that only much later in the *Cartesian Meditations*.

own passages to bring his work into publishable form, she found body and soul uneasily “thrown in” between nature, constituted by the natural attitude, and spirit, constituted by the personal attitude, without a satisfactory explanation as to how the domains and the attitudes interrelated in the constitution of the human being.<sup>27</sup> This, to her, was disappointing, all the more so because she thought she had accomplished the needed clarification in outline in her doctoral dissertation.<sup>28</sup> Seeing Husserl struggle with issues she thought she had resolved, without his being willing to revisit her contribution, made her accept several detours. Meanwhile she therefore edited the *Lectures on Time Consciousness*, subsequently published by Heidegger, and wrote and edited several of Husserl’s articles. Yet, unable to convince herself any longer that Husserl was prepared to rewrite and finish his great project of founding the sciences, she finally resigned from her post, much to Husserl’s surprise. As she could not reconcile herself with the idea that the project would never get beyond the hurdle it had met with Husserl’s incomprehension, she set out to contribute toward its accomplishment by herself writing *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*. This work was intended as a habilitation thesis, but she did not get sufficient support to break through the legal *status quo* as regards women’s access to university careers in order to succeed.

*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*,<sup>29</sup> with its two treatises: *Sentient Causality* and *Individual and Community* consists of constitutional analyses of the psyche on the one hand and of the spirit on the other, distinguishing the psyche from the spirit and nature in the first treatise, and understanding the spirit in its mediation between individual and community in the second.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup>Marianne Sawicki (*Body Text and Science*) and Mariele Wulf (introduction to ESGA 8) have both provided analyses of *Ideas II* suggesting that the contentious issue was the status of the body.

<sup>28</sup>It involves the constitution of the body as well as the psyche, the soul, and the mind from experience, but experience enriched by the experience of the other by means of empathy. It makes me identify (constitute) my own structure as one of a kind, when I have someone in front of me, whose structure appears similar and makes me wonder whether in fact I could also be what I see him to be.

<sup>29</sup>*Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, literally “Contributions Toward the Philosophical Foundation of Psychology and the Humanities.”

<sup>30</sup>Marianne Sawicki has translated *Psyche* as “the sentient” and *Geist* as “the

constitution of the psyche and the spirit is the key to the founding of the sciences of psychology and the humanities, as the first has the psyche for its object and the second the spirit. Both formal objects, the psyche and the spirit, being particularly dependent for their proper identification on the act of empathy, were specifically vulnerable to this act not being properly understood. This is why Stein's contribution to the foundational enterprise of phenomenology focused on the constitution of precisely these objects. She must have hoped that this contribution would allow for phenomenology to ground itself sufficiently in an understanding of the structure of intersubjectivity so as to be able to develop and be of use in the social sciences, by accounting for phenomena that later were to be identified as socially constructed.<sup>31</sup>

The contribution she made through *Ideas II* provided inspiration for people interested in the relationship with the other as well as in the intersubjective basis of phenomenology. If we read Stein's treatises in the Husserlian tradition as providing a systematic account of some of the issues dealt with in *Ideas II*, they allow for a phenomenological analysis of valuation, community and personality in the context provided by others.<sup>32</sup> This makes the treatises foundational for a phenomenological ethics and politics.

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mental." We find it easier to revert to more literal translations, although the connotations of these may make them sound a little quaint. Sawicki has also suggested that Husserl did not publish *Ideas II*, because he found Stein's *Beiträge* (which he himself published in the *Jahrbuch*) more convincing, thus rendering his account of the constitution of psyche and spirit redundant.

<sup>31</sup>A comparison with Alfred Schutz' *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1967) (*Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* [Vienna: Springer, 1932]) could yield very interesting results.

<sup>32</sup>For further exploration of the issues addressed in this work see my "Study-guide to Edith Stein's *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*" in *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society*, 2004, pp. 40–76; Sawicki's work cited above; and, for the background to Stein's political and social thought, MacIntyre's *Edith Stein. A Philosophical Prologue, 1913–1922*. See also B. Beckmann-Zöllner and H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz (eds.), *Die unbekannte Edith Stein: Phänomenologie und Sozialphilosophie* (Peter Lang, 2006) and Wolfgang Riess: *Der Weg vom Ich zum Anderen. Die philosophische Begründung einer Theorie von Individuum, Gemeinschaft und Staat bei Edith Stein* (Dresden: Thelem, 2010).

*Hermeneutics*

As Stein positioned herself as a phenomenologist, she thought it important to include in her readings not only the Munich phenomenologists, such as Brentano, Pfänder, and Scheler, but also hermeneutical thinkers like Dilthey.<sup>33</sup> This made her development somewhat parallel to that of Heidegger, and gives her philosophy a characteristic “existential” aspect. It is an aspect, rather than an element, as Stein understood motivation to be an *aspect* of constitution, not a replacement of it, and not superseding it, but explaining it as what makes constitution “free” and spiritual.<sup>34</sup> As Stein understands experience as such to be motivated, it is analyzable as constituted also by means of interpretation of the motivation present in it. Experience is expressing the *one experiencing*, the *what experienced*, and the *possibility of experience* as such.<sup>35</sup> In this way her version of phenomenology includes hermeneutics, as it includes a phenomenology of values, and does not regard the constitutional analysis of anything to be finished unless it also includes the constitution of its value.<sup>36</sup> We in fact experience the world as motivating us, and in doing so we interpret it.<sup>37</sup> Even when we constitute a cup, a spot, or a cloud, we are motivated to do so, as there is otherwise no way of explaining why we pay attention to these things. Our ways of seeing things thus speak to others and to ourselves about what we value and who we are.

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<sup>33</sup>We already mentioned Pfänder’s influence on Ricoeur’s philosophy. An important study could be accomplished by comparing the influence of Pfänder on Stein and Ricoeur, and evaluating its impact for their respective accounts of understanding.

<sup>34</sup>*On the Problem of Empathy* IV, 2.

<sup>35</sup>Peter Freienstein: *Sinn verstehen* (Turnshare, 2007) is remarkable in presenting Stein’s work *Endliches und ewiges Sein* as a development of this theme, in a direction he designates as *imagistischer Philosophie*. In his estimation, Stein claims that not only experience and the experienced have the character of being an image, or being in the image (of the ultimate, of God), but also the possibility of experience expresses the ultimate and can only be understood as such. That Stein read the world, herself, and others as expression and thus as meaningful in this way is very plausible. That it is the fundamental structure of all her thought is a very powerful idea that merits consideration.

<sup>36</sup>*An Investigation concerning the State*, II, introduction, p. 147. ESGA 7, p. 107.

<sup>37</sup>Sartre would have said: “as part of our ‘project.’”

Not all experience is spiritual (motivated by values), however, as not all I's are spiritual or are persons.<sup>38</sup> That is, not all I's access motivation freely; some are driven by instinct only. Nor are all persons necessarily psycho-physical.<sup>39</sup> Persons have a center constituted by the I, and this is why collective persons are persons only in a metaphorical sense.<sup>40</sup> Persons are essentially value-related:

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<sup>38</sup>As Stein struggled with the issues found in *Ideas II and III*, she wrote "The Ontic Structure of the Human Person," which attempts to meet Husserl's expectations that the empirical subject includes the person, something which she had already, in principle at least, rejected in her dissertation. This explains why both Wulf and Freienstein regard the person as forming part of the empirical I according to Stein. They have this from an inexact interpretation of the unpublished *Ontische Struktur*, which finds its way into her Breslauer lectures *Einführung in die Philosophie*. They both miss the distinction already present in the dissertation, and carried through in the *Beiträge*, which gives a definition of the person as value-valent and the I as defined by the function of constitution, which functions in and through the person as well, insofar as constitution is motivated.

<sup>39</sup>*On the Problem of Empathy* IV, 9.

<sup>40</sup>*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, II, I, §1: "A community-subject, as analog of the pure ego, does not exist." Here Stein disagrees with Scheler, who did regard collective persons as real in the same way as individual persons. Max Scheler: *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973) (*Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* [Bern: Francke Verlag, 1966]), (II, 6/ B., 4 ad 4) pp. 520–22: "We must designate as collective persons the various centers of experiencing in this endless totality of living with one another, insofar as these centers fully correspond to the definitions of the person which we gave earlier . . . . The collective person . . . is . . . an experienced *reality*." According to Stein collective persons do not have the *original* unity of the I required to provide the unity of the person, although the subjectivity of collective experience certainly is identifiable as such. (*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, II, II, §4,d [dd]). Stein thus in no way identifies person and human being, although she does regard the human being to constitute itself as a person among human persons. She does not, like Scheler ("Hence an individual and a collective person 'belong' to every *finite* person" [op. cit.]), consider the person to be *essentially* related to a collective person, although she does think the person is dependent for its identification on the identification of other persons, and also considers the person's experience as possible to empathize and therefore able in principle to enter into collective experience. Antonio Calcagno (*The Philosophy of Edith Stein* [Duquesne University Press, 2007]) seems to think that Stein, perhaps more like Scheler, considers the person "a multiplicity of persons" (pp. 125–28), something logically impossible (insofar as it is not possible for "one" to be "a multiplicity" without rendering both terms meaningless). It nevertheless reflects the idea, common to Scheler and Stein, that the person by its essence as subject of motivation, founded on the logical unity of the I, is capable of participating in

they are “powered” by the sources, which we identify as values, and they live from these; they are their relationship with them. The personality reflects the worldview of the I, i.e., its (access to) values, and our understanding of this personality in turn expresses our worldview, our personality, our (access to) values, our interpretation of the world.<sup>41</sup> Hermeneutics, the discipline of interpretation, interprets the motivations of persons, whether as manifested in productions of the spirit or in worldviews revealed by actions. For Stein, therefore, this discipline cannot be separated from a phenomenology that does not reduce personal experience.

Husserl had found it difficult to see constitution as motivated, quite likely because he thought the unity of the transcendental viewpoint threatened by it. Motivation, in fact, appears to us as coming from the outside, precisely because it energizes us from sources that do not appear to pertain to ourselves.<sup>42</sup> Stein draws from the theory of Scheler to attempt to access the meaning of the world, as variously constituted by many subjects motivated in different ways. The world includes the pattern that motivatedness leaves behind as an intelligible structure, and which we identify and can analyze as the social construction of world. In this way Stein goes beyond Husserl by means of insights gleaned from Reinach, Scheler, and Dilthey, but she does so in a direction indicated by Husserl’s great vision, and in an attempt to remain faithful to it.

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experience that is shared by other persons and thus in its essence is capable of forming community. Persons intercept motivation and can follow it and understand it (*Einführung in die Philosophie*, II, b,  $\beta$ , 2).

<sup>41</sup>Persons can also act on motivation, and the manner in which they do so as psycho-physical individuals leaves a mark in their temporal being which we read as their character, shining through their emotional response to things. The character in turn is supported by a temperament constituted by the facilities for emotional response characteristic of a psyche (*ibid.*).

<sup>42</sup>Thus a solipsist tends to disregard this experience, also because it introduces me to an experience I can share with others and of which I am not the master. The sense of threat, of course, amounts to a motivation that can be understood, and Stein quite likely did understand that the I can feel so overwhelmed by foreign experience and by motivating powers outside itself, that it may want to shut itself off from both in order to concentrate on its own experience, validating it by disregarding the experience of others.

*The structure of the human being*

The structure of intersubjectivity reflects, unsurprisingly, the ontic structure of human beings in the world.<sup>43</sup> Stein sees this structure as fourfold.<sup>44</sup>

(1) The fact that we have a similar experiential structure (a body endowed with the same type of sense organs allowing for specifically structured experiential access to what exists) allows for intersubjective constitution in the first place. We can communicate (and thus co-constitute) with beings of different experiential structure to the point where analogy obtains: we can understand, and by technology translate, the insect's ability to see infrared light and we appreciate and make use of the dog's extraordinary sense of smell (for hunting down prey or detecting illegal substances, for example). Because we have specific means of experiencing, i.e., fields of experience, in common, we can interact accordingly.

(2) The fact that we are sensitive or have a psyche allows for us to form herd-like structures, like animals (to communicate, in other words, by lateral transferral of life-power) and to feel pleasure and pain.<sup>45</sup>

(3) That we are free to direct our attention and decide means we can enter into agreements and other associational arrangements.

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<sup>43</sup>“Ontic,” for Stein, refers to the world as judged to be from within the natural attitude. Thus *Einführung in die Philosophie* and *An Investigation concerning the State* are analyzing the ontic structure of nature, spirit, and the state respectively. “Ontic” does not mean naïve in the sense of primitive: we can make highly reflected ontic analyses, based on constitutional analyses, as indeed are Stein's analyses.

<sup>44</sup>*Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, II, II, §4, a–d. See also Marianne Sawicki's foreword to the work, and her “Personal Connections.”

<sup>45</sup>This means of communication is also used when we ride a horse: the horse responds to our state of mind, our decisiveness, our intention. Unlike the horse, however, we can consciously work at our state of mind and take it in hand by the extraordinary resource, which we alone possess: the will. That the mass is formed by sentient contagion and thus has no inner structure accounts for Rosa Luxemburg's understanding of the mass: “The mass is constantly that which it *must be* according to the circumstances of the time, and it is constantly on the verge of becoming something totally different than what it appears to be” (Letter, 16 February 1917, from the Wronke captivity to Mathilde Wurm, GB 5, p. 176, my translation). Luxemburg's appeal to the concept of “mass” illustrates its importance in contemporary political thinking.

(4) That we, finally, are value-valent as persons makes us capable of entering into community, which can form the basis for a common life initiated by the motivational energy freely accessed in its objects; the sources of the motivational power experienced, the values.

Motivational energy is not the only type of energy that contributes to the energy-economy of the human being. Motivational energy flows into the general stream experienced, and here it is experienced only in its mixture with psychic and physical energy as life-power.<sup>46</sup> Life-power (or the lack of it) makes itself felt in experiences of tiredness, nervousness, and excitement, which seem to condition our ability to access motivation. This experienced conditioning is experienced as transcendent, i.e., as something influencing experience without being completely transparent to it.<sup>47</sup> Stein identifies this conditioning factor as “psychic causality”: distinct from physical causality because it is experienced in our *experiencing*, but nevertheless causality as it is opaque and unresponsive to the life of the mind itself: motivation. We seem, in the context of daily experience, less able to lead a very engaging conversation when we are tired, for example, or it “costs us more energy,” which means that afterwards we feel entirely exhausted. To access the motivating power of the values, a certain amount of life power seems required: like a car dependent on its battery for starting, we seem dependent on maintaining a certain reserve of life-power to get “the motor” of spiritual energy “going.” Life power, because it enlivens the entire network of the psyche (which is constituted from all the phenomena manifesting the influence of life power) allows in turn for spiritual energy to energize the individual and for the individual to feel motivation. Life power also carries the motivational energy out into the expression of feelings that blend into the personal radiance, to which animals also react.<sup>48</sup> This means

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<sup>46</sup>Christof Betschart: “Was ist Lebenskraft? Edith Steins erkenntnistheoretische Prämissen in ‘Psychische Kausalität’ Teil I,” *Edith Stein Jahrbuch* (2009): 154–84.

<sup>47</sup>The values also may not be completely transparent to experience, as they are experienced as sources of energy (whether positive or negative), but they can be investigated in themselves for what they are, for their meaning beyond my interception of them, which in turn is conditioned by my psychological state.

<sup>48</sup>They react to fear, evil intention, self assurance, kindness, and approachability, among other things.

that spiritual energy can be accessed not only from the objective values as such, but also vicariously through the other person's psyche and radiance, as when I take on someone else's enthusiasm for something, become depressed in the company of someone who is depressed, or catch someone's enmity and return it before I am aware of it.

Intersubjective constitution also marks what we can call solidarity, which for Stein can stem from four sources and often stems from several of these: It can arise from physical experiential similarity (1); it can arise from the psyche, which allows us to "pick up" feelings and ideas through "psychic contagion" (2); it can arise from the will, which allows us to decide to enter an association or join a cause (3); and finally it can arise from our value response and involve our very personalities when we are motivated by the same thing (4).

The social construction of the world, or to put it in Stein's terms, its intersubjective constitution, is dependent on the various ways in which we can share experience. This in turn depends on how we are ourselves constituted as psycho-physical persons, i.e., how we constitute ourselves. This constitution of ourselves is not arbitrary: it arises from experience as we experience it, but it is motivated, and in this way we are involved in how we identify ourselves and the world in which we live.

The social reality we experience as a result of our co-constitution of intersubjective constitution takes different forms according to our constitution of the "we," which we each take to be ours. How I perceive the world, in other words, depends on how I constitute the "we" I take to be determining for the intersubjective constitution of the world. I can constitute this "we" in four specifically different ways in accordance with the way in which motivation is transmitted to connect the individuals and power their shared experience.

(1) I can say "we" of all those whose experiential structure is like mine, i.e. all those who are the same kind of being as myself. Here the "we" depends on the "type" I identify myself with.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>See my *On the Problem of Human Dignity* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009), 252ff. and 279ff., concerning Stein's understanding of the epistemological tool of the "type."

(2) I can say “we” of a group to which I belong because we share life power by means of sentient contagion. For example, at a football match I can be affected by the energy of the crowd without being internally affected by the objective motivating powers (the values) originating the motivational energy laterally transmitted to me by means of others’ psyches. I can grow excited, as a baby might cry at hearing another baby cry. We can enter into such connections, as can animals, because we are sentient beings with a psyche. The psyche is not *per se* individual, and like a computer network can be plugged into another to form a functional unity. Thus, by switching off the substantial principle of individuality in the person (i.e., the soul), and letting common inclinations take the place of personal valuation and choice, a submerging of the person in the mass becomes possible, thus allowing the energy of the mass to flow freely, but by the same token disallowing the soul of the individual person to express itself from its depths, perhaps even at all.<sup>50</sup>

(3) A “we” can also be instituted by an act of will. This is in sharp contrast with the previous ways of being together, as will is a characteristic precisely of the individual and presupposes the original unity of the I. The motivational energy that binds the group together is thus not transmitted laterally through a network of psyches that knows no borders (like interconnected computers); it is transmitted by specific acceptance, whether or not this acceptance is in accord with my deepest motivations. I can say “we” because of a choice I have made to belong to a group or organization of which I have become a member by some procedure involving choice (it may also be others’ choice on my behalf). This associates me with the values for which my organization stands, with its “cause” and the organization retains the “right” to disengage me from itself if I do not conform to it. This, however, does not mean that I am in fact motivated by the values of the organization. The association, Stein says, regards the individual as an object and deals with it accordingly: objective qualities of the individual allow it to be a member of this or that group and permit its procedural involvement with the organization and its official subscription to the values, by which the organization retains some power over the expressed value response of the person who is a member.

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<sup>50</sup>When in complete consciousness I choose to do this, I leave my soul behind, hence the expression “losing one’s soul.”

(4) Finally I can say “we” because I share directly the motivational energy stemming from the values with others who are motivated by the same values. This sharing is an objective sharing of the motivational power intrinsic to the value, and it forms a commonality far stronger and simpler than the others. It involves not only the will and the psyche; it involves the whole person, no longer hostage to either will or psyche, but spontaneously expressing itself, the soul, in choices and psycho-somatic expression. Community is thus the only form of commonality that allows the human being to be fully involved with all that it is, as both will and psyche can follow on from the personal response without amputation or instrumentalization. Here, then, the soul can find expression.

Community is not, however, the only form of commonality that determines the structure of the intersubjective world. The world as “hard reality” involves a good deal of structuration initiated through the other forms of commonality, and thus institutions, pacts, associations, trends, fashions, and mass movements shape the social reality of our world, in ways that often provide very little room for personal expression and sometimes threaten the survival of the individual and/or his soul.

#### *Private lectures*

While trying to obtain access to academic posts, Stein taught privately in her family home in Breslau.<sup>51</sup> She gave a series of lectures now published as *Introduction to Philosophy*.<sup>52</sup> The lectures can be read with benefit as an introduction to *phenomenology*, since Stein understands phenomenology to be central to the enterprise of philosophy as such. Having discussed the privileged relationship phenomenology has with philosophy, she proceeds according to the phenomenological method to the constitution and analysis of the two main regions of material ontology, nature and spirit, with the foundation of the respective sciences issuing from these. The work unsurprisingly reflects the structure and idea of Husserl’s *Ideas II* and

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<sup>51</sup>Today Wrocław in Poland.

<sup>52</sup>Among the students was the later well-known social anthropologist Norbert Elias. See “Letter to Fritz Kaufmann,” 30 April 1920: *Selbstbildnis in Briefen I*, ESGA 2, no. 31, p. 57; *Self-Portrait in Letters 1916–1942*, no. 35.

III, and is possibly the most comprehensive statement of Stein's understanding of the role and potential of phenomenology.<sup>53</sup> Here we find, in contrast to Husserl's *Ideas*, empathy accorded the significance Stein thought it had to have in the constitution of the other, the person, the body, the psyche, and the spiritual world. There is no distinction in *attitude* to account for the distinction between the regions (as in Husserl's distinction between the naturalistic and the personalistic attitude), but a distinction between the *lawfulness* of the natural world, causality, and the *lawfulness* of the spiritual world, motivation, accounted for phenomenologically in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from Stein's clear statement of the method of phenomenology, the work also clarifies the role she accords to the description of ontic structures, i.e., the description of the *what* of what is experienced, abstracted from the constitutional issues (i.e., the possible analysis of the acts in which it is thus constituted), though presupposing them. This emphasis on eidetic analysis and description of the *what* that is experienced as part of the phenomenological task later allows Stein to conduct comparative analyses of classical and medieval metaphysics without compromising her phenomenological commitment to the description of experience as experienced. The discussion of idealist and realist stances reveals that she is unwilling to side with either because experience as such seems to disallow it.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Bearing in mind that the work, although obviously prepared for publication, was not published in Stein's lifetime.

<sup>54</sup>Stein was working on *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* at the same time as *Introduction*, and a manuscript known as *The Ontic Structure of the Person*, as suggested by Wulf (Introduction to ESGA 8). The three endeavors are systematically linked in that *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* concerns the constitutional issues relating specifically to the psyche and the spirit, *Introduction* sets forth the ontic description of the regions of nature and spirit with their intersection in the body and psyche, and *The Ontic Structure*, as its title suggests, is concerned with the description of the fully constituted person. These dimensions were to characterize Stein's work in its entirety: the ultimate reliance on experience, the corresponding exploration of formal and material ontology, and the understanding of the human person as subject and object of experience.

<sup>55</sup>ESGA 8, pp. 69–72. According to Stein's own table of contents: I, c. 5. Stein admits of an "absolute being" of the schemata (prototypes, ideas, or essences), "But with the absoluteness of the schemata or categories the question of the independence of being of what we call the real external world has not yet been addressed. The schema of the thing is of course not itself a thing, it is rather what

*The State*

Two of the offshoots of Stein's specifically intersubjective phenomenology, anthropology and ontology, were to flourish later in the twin works *The Structure of the Human Person* and *What is the Human Being?* on the one hand, and in *Potency and Act* and *Finite and eternal Being* on the other. In 1921, as the Germans attempted to recover after the First World War, Stein had not finished the analysis of the socially constructed world. She turned toward an eidetic analysis of the most pervasive social construction: the state.

*An Investigation Concerning the State* attempts to show what the state is, and how it relates to other important communities like family, tribe, nation, religion, and friendships.<sup>56</sup> The state constitutes itself as sovereignty and is constituted in our identification of it. This sovereignty deploys itself in legislation first and foremost and in the maintenance of the order thus instituted, whether by means of adjudication, policing, war, education, or public policy.<sup>57</sup> That the state is legislator means its core function is to originate law. In this function it cannot be but sovereign, although it can by its own initiative limit its sovereignty in certain regards (e.g., let the family educate the children as it sees fit, allow religious practices to influence morality, leave the market to take care of the economy). It may well see its own interest in such self-limitation, as the acknowledgment of the existence of other communities within the state leaves the subjects better able to accept the burdens of confor-

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makes every real thing a thing, in which each 'participates' (to use the Platonic image of the relationship between the idea and its realization). But it has everywhere a different filling [*Ausfüllung*], and the substance [*Bestand*] of the thing is never exhausted by that which corresponds to the schema in it. Thus it remains an open question whether, of the two mutually related domains of being—consciousness and reality (in our case: nature)—one has the priority of absolute existence over the other, while each has only its meaning as its correlate" (my translation, pp. 71–72). *Potency and Act* and *Finite and Eternal Being* seem to maintain this refusal to side with either realism or idealism.

<sup>56</sup> *An Investigation* (ESGA 7) I, §1; I, §3d; II, §6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* I, §3d, p. 120ff. ESGA 7, p. 84ff. Stein speaks of a required recognition from those concerned by legislation because it pertains to them (the citizens) and a recognition by other states.

mity otherwise imposed by the state.<sup>58</sup> Because the state as such is mere sovereignty expressing itself in legislation, it is by its essence neither good nor bad, as both law and order can be as harmful as they can be beneficial.<sup>59</sup>

The state in this way becomes a background to the communication between its citizens and may condition the unfolding of the human person as this happens in the community shaped by the organization it gives itself, or is determined by. Education, for example, is organized in the community, by persons who operate in the various contexts available, be it that of the family or tribe, that of the state, or that of a church. Their allegiance to any of these contexts determines their strength, and the interest they may have in collaboration. The sovereign state can lay the legal framework for education in a manner conducive to the full development of the person and in consideration of the various communities it forms part of, but it can also for its own purposes (i.e., to remain sovereign) direct it toward goals that are foreign to the person as such, such as efficiency, destruction of subjects of other states, production, or power.<sup>60</sup> In all of these ways the human being is taken as a means to an end set by the state. When the human being is no longer respected as an end in itself we call the state totalitarian.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. I, §3d) p. 112. “The state within whose sovereign territory that happens [that private groups take over functions such as judging] remains unaffected as such, as long as the territory is not penetrated with overwhelming force against the will of the state, but [the intervention] is instead authorized by the state with the express or tacit proviso that the state can at any time suspend the law made by the other autonomous power and issue its own regulations. That is, as long as it is a matter of a self-limitation of the civil authority that does not signify any limitation of sovereignty.”

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. II, §4 b, p. 172 (ESGA 7, p. 119): “Since the state is to be seen as a subject of free acts, ethical duties can—apparently—be imposed on the state. Yet it is clear from the start that the state is not an ethical subject in the same sense as it is a legal subject. To be a state *means* to be law’s subject. In the instant when it ceases to bear the responsibility for the operative legal system, the state ceases to exist.”

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. II, §1, p. 149: “the state as such merely leaves the possibility open for the concrete states once again. Then in principle it is not to be rejected out of hand that the mental life [*geistiges Leben*] could develop just as well or better without state regulation as it does with it. And conceivably there are states that do more to destroy mental values than to produce them.”

<sup>61</sup> As Stein shows that the state as such is value-neutral, and by its essence is an

Stein sees the state as defined by its activity of legislation, and essentially determined by the preservation of its own sovereignty.<sup>62</sup> Power within the state, therefore (or within any other organization that has a state-like character, i.e., essentially is sovereignty), consists in participating in this goal of self-preservation, and involves removal of factors threatening the state's integrity. To the state the individual human being counts insofar as he or she participates in its life, i.e., first and foremost as its representative, but also as citizen, producer, investor, source of know-how or other skills of use to secure the material and organizational base of the state.<sup>63</sup> Moral concern is as such foreign to the state insofar as it is immaterial to its sovereignty, but it may in fact be useful insofar as the state relies on the spontaneous cooperation of its members and on their flourishing. The community that underlies the state in the modern nation state is, as the name indicates, the nation, or the people. This reality, which depends on or is manifest in a certain cultural unity, i.e. a set of commonly accepted norms, things done and thought, is not directly initiated by the state: the state cannot invent a people or a culture. Nor can it invent community, since its unique goal is order, and since community has no goal outside itself.

In the years that followed the composition of her work on the state, Stein experienced the German nation attempting to organize itself into one state at the expense of certain human beings,

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attempt to maintain sovereignty by legislation, she shows how totalitarianism is possible. The word, of course, post-dates her work, and is linked to the discussion of how something like the atrocities of the Third Reich provoking the Second World War (and Stalin's regime in Russia) could be avoided in the future. Stein sees the tendency toward the extension of sovereignty to encompass all domains of human life, if needed for the preservation of state power, as a tendency inherent in the essence of the state as such. According to Stein this tendency will always remain. The link between Modernity and the Holocaust, analyzed by Zygmunt Bauman in a book of the same title, is thus accounted for insofar as modernity is characterized precisely by the emergence of the state.

<sup>62</sup>*An Investigation concerning the State*, I, §2 e, p. 66ff. Whether the state is good or bad for those with whom it comes into contact depends on the allegiance to values of those who represent it, and thus to the value of the individuals pertaining to it.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.* I, §3, g, p. 138: "If the state (...) makes provision that everything will function within its realm in a way that corresponds to the interests of the community (...), the state does not immediately assure the preservation of sovereignty (as with the maintenance of the law), but rather, so to speak, the material basis for sovereignty, that which in fact makes sovereignty possible."

who were viewed as outside the ethnic group defined as the carrier of the state. The definition of Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs as non-Germans (despite their living within the German lands) was an attempt by the state to consolidate itself as a nation state by the means of ethnic cleansing. Because this is not prevented by anything essential to the state Stein does not recognize the state to have any value *per se*.<sup>64</sup> The value of the state depends on the values it realizes by means of its officials and members, as these in fact are not only carriers of the state's aim of perpetuating itself, but are also persons capable of value response. Their motivatedness, i.e., the motivatedness which the self-perpetuation of the state concretely allows for, determines the value of this state. The state becomes an expression of a collective identity, i.e., of a specific type of intersubjective constitution, and as such it further conditions this constitution and any interpretations of reality that are made within its gravitational field of sovereignty. The state's tendency to sanction meaning that testifies to other spheres of sovereignty stems from the fact that it must stay in charge in order to remain what it is. From this stems also its long term or enlightened interest in incorporating and making room for as many other worldviews as is feasible, insofar as this enhances its prospects of stability.

## II. The middle period<sup>65</sup>

Stein's understanding of the importance of the value response in the carriers and representatives of the state no doubt led her to move on a personal level toward reconsidering what her own contribution could be as it became clear that the possibilities of working as a university lecturer in philosophy were slim. It is in

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<sup>64</sup>*An Investigation*, II, §1 (p. 149): "conceivably you could have individuals for whom—from the standpoint of utility—the state would be superfluous. And on the other hand, you could have states whose institutions do more to destroy life values than to further them, and that thus are to be designated as harmful. Therefore a justification [of the state] in principle is not possible in this way."

<sup>65</sup>This period includes the translations of Newman's letters and the *Idea of the University* (ESGA 21–22); the translation of Aquinas' *De veritate* (ESGA 23–24); articles on phenomenology and ontology (ESGA 9), the lectures on woman (ESGA 13) and on education (ESGA 16); the habilitation attempt *Potency and Act* (ESGA 10); the twin works *The Structure of the Human Person* and *What Is the Human Being?* (ESGA 14–15); and the autobiography *Life in a Jewish Family* (ESGA 1).

this context that one must look for her motives for requesting baptism.

Stein had engaged herself politically earlier, and her reflections on the state no doubt also grew out of that engagement.<sup>66</sup> With *An Investigation concerning the State*, Stein had nevertheless seen that the State was not a “first” reality: it is dependent for its value on the value response of the people who lead it. Thus it had become clear to her that this value response, and in particular the accessibility of the higher values to the people representing the state, were of a greater importance—and indeed could be a matter of averting the greatest dangers of the totalitarian state—than the practical engagement in the running of the state. Her desire to be admitted to a community guided by the highest type of value response, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit—the spirituality motivated by the highest values—expressed what she probably saw as the most constructive contribution she could give to society. She could give herself as a spiritual antenna in order to channel the best of spirits to those around her.

Her conversion was very difficult for her mother, who had been supporting her philosophical career financially. Stein now sought employment to obtain financial independence and felt the need to spend time finding her place in the community of believers in which she now found herself. Her years teaching German and Latin in the St. Magdalene secondary school in Speyer afforded her both. Here, at the instigation of Erich Przywara, she translated Newman’s letters and *The Idea of a University*, and also Aquinas’ *De veritate*. The Thomas “translation,” in contrast with those of Newman, is a critical commentary, the ambition of which it is to translate Thomas’ thought into contemporary philosophical idiom in order to foster not only understanding of Thomas, but also of this idiom itself. To this end Thomas’ text is restructured, abbreviated, and provided with succinct and insightful résumés and critical comments, attempting to penetrate—as always—to the matters under discussion and not only to what Thomas says. To Stein the most problematic feature in Aquinas was his appeal to authorities to justify the

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<sup>66</sup>See in particular the excellent background analyses of Alasdair MacIntyre: *Edith Stein. A Philosophical Prologue, 1913–1922* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

outcome of his argument. This is toned down, so that the argument provided is allowed to stand on its own.<sup>67</sup>

This way of proceeding—successful because of its precision—highlights the epochal difference between the presuppositions of classical and modern philosophy. The thoroughness lets Stein “discover” things obvious to the careful and persistent reader, which easily evaporates when doctrinal consistency takes precedence. Aquinas, for instance, admits that God and angels could have knowledge of the individual, which reveals that he thinks that individuation by matter (by the principle of non-intelligibility) was of no essential significance for them.<sup>68</sup> Thus individuality as such cannot be unintelligible (and he could not reasonably think it was), since it is not unintelligible to superior intellects. This is a doctrine Stein will maintain, but it exposes her to some of her more “Thomistic” critics, who accuse her of not having understood Thomas properly.<sup>69</sup> Stein’s method presupposes, in fact, that it is possible to bridge these traditions, that translation is possible, that the enterprise of translating Aquinas into German is not meaningless.

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<sup>67</sup>This mostly clarifies it. See also *Potenz und Act*, ESGA 10, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup>ESGA 23, Q.VIII, a. 11.

<sup>69</sup>ESGA 3, *Selbstbildnis in Briefen*, no. 344, from Laurentius M. Siemer, 3 November 1934: “But now I must tell you something that might hurt you. You do not know Thomism. Both your translation as well as your review have convinced me of this. The principle of individuation as you see it has nothing to do with the teaching of Saint Thomas. Perhaps even less the teaching on matter and form, as it is seen by you. I often had to smile, as I read your article. In your translation it is not very different; one sees nearly at every page, that the entire system hasn’t been comprehended by you. You draw completely unthomistic thoughts into thomistic sentences” (my translation). The article in question is probably a review of a translation of the *Summa contra gentiles*. From her critics, such as Siemer, it should be clear that Stein’s translation is an interpretation. To this critic, the two points on which she considers Aquinas in need of improvement (the principle of individuation and the relationship between matter and form) already stand out. Stein’s answer to this letter (345, *Self Portrait in Letters 1916–42*, CWES 5 no. 184)—disconcerting as it might seem for those awaiting clarification of Stein’s own position—explains the divergence from her own lack of understanding. This is not at all insincere, according to her method of thinking through to the things themselves. Stein was not yet sure that her lack of understanding was due to the fact that Thomas’ position on these two issues was unintelligible.

It was the problem of translating between traditions, and so of mediating understanding, which was to focus Stein's vocation as a philosopher as she tried to find her way in Christian thought. Translation reflects the hermeneutical problem in its entirety: the difficulty of penetrating chosen texts toward an understanding that can be shared and thus partake of the tradition (in the handing on of texts, stories, and things) which is ours. The teacher is constantly confronted with this task: for the teacher tradition is not optional, whether as providing the material to be critiqued, the context for understanding, or a suggestion for the future of cultural life.

Stein's reflection on her own teaching practice occasioned many lectures and articles, and was brought to fruition in her twin work on educational anthropology.<sup>70</sup> Among these lectures and articles we find several specifically concerned with the education of women, and consequently on women's nature and place in society.<sup>71</sup> As these were lectures written for a large and mixed public, they are easier to read than Stein's monographs. Stein thought it regrettable that the social interest in the vocation of women was not reflected in an interest in the specific vocation of men. She also thought that there are no jobs women in principle cannot do, but that the labor market should accommodate women's specific needs and talents to be able to profit from these.

#### *Return to the university*

Stein was supported by many in her vocation as a philosopher. Dom Walzer of Beuron, who functioned as her spiritual director, in particular desired her participation in public life as a philosopher, and it was in accordance with his advice that she gave up her teaching post in Speyer to attempt another habilitation. *Potency and Act* is the first monograph that reveals the state of Stein's synthesis of scholastic and modern philosophy.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *Aufbau der menschlichen Person* (*The Structure of the Human Person*) and *Was ist der Mensch?* (*What is the Human Being?*) (ESGA 14–15). These works have as yet to be translated into English.

<sup>71</sup> ESGA 16 and 13; the latter translated as *Essays on Woman*, CWES 2.

<sup>72</sup> "Auseinandersetzung zwischen scholastischer und moderner Philosophie"

We know now that *Finite and Eternal Being* resulted from Stein's rewriting of *Potency and Act* for publication, and thus we are tempted to read the latter as an earlier version of the former. That is helpful insofar as it is, according to the subtitle, "studies toward a philosophy of being" and seeks, like *Finite and Eternal Being*, to ascend to the meaning of being. The two works are, however, profoundly different. The concept of matter present in the first work has been discarded in the second and consequently cannot serve as counter pole to pure act to account for order in the universe, nor to account for the difference between regional (material) and formal ontology. The latter distinction, phenomenological by its origin, is the more important one in *Potency and Act* (as it structures the entire work), and thus it is misleading to think that the work is simply Thomist.<sup>73</sup>

*Potency and Act* is an attempt to clarify what potency and act mean, from within experience, in accordance with Aquinas' thought and in accordance with Husserl's. Already in the translation of *De veritate* Stein had found Thomas' reliance on Pseudo-Dionysius puzzling, and it is possible that she began her translation of his works while translating Aquinas.<sup>74</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius' neo-Platonism (as

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(Letter to Finke 6 January 1931 [ESGA 2, letter 130]). Heinrich Finke, professor of history in Freiburg, where the habilitation attempt would take place, also encouraged Stein "not to bury her talent" (ibid).

<sup>73</sup>A footnote at the beginning of the first chapter refers to G. Manser, who "calls the doctrine of act and potency the "innermost essence of Thomism" in "Wesen des Thomismus," *Divus Thomas* 38 (1924), p. 10. In both works the concept of *analogia entis* plays a paramount role. This reflects the lasting influence of Erich Przywara on Stein's thought. She writes about that influence in *Finite and Eternal Being* (Author's Preface, p. xxix): "Although the first version of her book [she is here probably referring to *Potenz und Akt*] and the final version of the *Analogia Entis* were written about the same time, the author was privileged to look over the earlier drafts of the *Analogia Entis*. Moreover, the lively exchange of ideas between the author and Fr. Przywara in the years from 1925 to 1931 has in all probability decisively influenced both his and her approach to the identical issue. To the author this exchange of ideas was an additional powerful stimulus when she resumed her philosophical research." A thorough comparison of the two works has yet to be undertaken.

<sup>74</sup>*Wege der Gotteserkenntnis*, ESGA 17. *Ways to Know God: the "Symbolic Theology" of Dionysius the Areopagite and its Objective Presuppositions in Knowledge and Faith*, CWES 8, is Stein's own completion of the collected works of the Areopagite (extrapolated from the lines of thought inherent in the work as a whole, or which

present in *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* and *The Celestial Hierarchy*) lends Aquinas' understanding of the analogy of being a systematic aspect, not present to the same extent in either Aristotle's or Plato's thought. Thomas' system results from the interaction of potency and act, together building the analogy of being, and it is thus not surprising that Stein chose these terms as the terms of her *Auseinandersetzung*.

Apart from understanding what those terms mean, Stein is exploring their role for Thomas' and Husserl's understanding of the whole, of all there is to know, of being. She says herself that her work issues from an attempt to understand the "method" of Aquinas (which in her work on the translation of *De veritate* she found lacking), to expose the *Organon* of his fundamental concepts.<sup>75</sup> In this way she is exploring potency and act through their function for the understanding of everything else, as they in fact play the role of a kind of method for Aquinas. She finds it necessary to do so because Thomas doesn't explore his own method, and because she as a philosopher must find out whether the reliance on these terms is justified or not. Her own method is thus an "objective" (*sachlichen*) analysis of Thomas' fundamental concepts, i.e., an investigation of the realities expressed in the concepts, a penetration toward their meaning, toward "the things themselves."<sup>76</sup> As potency and act divide and encompass being in its entirety, penetration toward their meaning is likewise a way of approaching the whole of being, as indeed Aquinas did with the help of this distinction, following a well established tradition. Both—the penetration toward the *Organon* of Aquinas' thought and the approach to being as such—are equally important for Stein, although the clarification of the function or the method *serves* to provide access to being as such, to found a philosophy of being, as promised in the subtitle. When Stein thus claims, at the end of the foreword to the work, that the investigation itself must account for its method, she points, as is characteristic of all her philosophical activity, toward the things themselves as the ultimate reason for proceeding toward them, and she at the same time acknowledges that one will accept the method only to the extent that these same things are likewise the ultimate reason for one's own pursuit.

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Stein thought had to be the lines of thought given the subject matter treated).

<sup>75</sup>*Potenz und Akt*, ESGA 10, p. 4 (Vorwort); CWES XI, p 1.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 4–5; CWES, pp. 9–11

The work begins therefore by an initial exposition of the concepts of potency and act as they occur in Aquinas' *De potentia*.<sup>77</sup> Then the phenomenological starting-point is recalled and experiences are sought that could account for the experiential content of the concepts. These are found in our experience of time: I am now potentially recalling what happened many years ago, actualizing the memory, but not to the point of being able to make it be what happens now.<sup>78</sup> Likewise I can imagine something and attempt to realize it: the very attempt shows the potentiality of my being toward the future. The being of the I, which the phenomenological consideration of doubt leaves as the only epistemologically certain type of being, falls apart in what I am now, what I was, and what I will be, with only the now being fully actual. This gives me the idea of pure being—that being which is always fully actual, in which there is no potentiality—as a counter idea to the I that I am, whose potentiality I experience in the experience of time. Act and potency thus correspond to experiential realities framing the experience of being, the being of the I. In Stein's phenomenological parlance, "act" refers to the movement in which the I is engaging now, its being and living, and "potency" to all that is transcendent in this experience; everything "retentional" and "protentional" and all qualities and depths of the experiencing I.

With the experiential pattern clarified from within the indubitable being of the I, three spheres of being emerge: "[1] the immanent sphere, which is immediately and inseparably close to us and of which we are conscious; [2] a transcendent sphere, which heralds itself in immanence; and [3] a third sphere radically different in its being from the immanent sphere as well as from this transcendent sphere," namely, pure being, pure actuality.<sup>79</sup> A threefold way leads from the immanent to this last, likewise transcendent, sphere: mystical experience, faith, and logical proceeding.<sup>80</sup>

In the work we thus encounter being under three forms—the internal world, the external world, and the beyond of the world—spirit in persons and ideas, nature in material things, and the

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., I, § 1.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., I, § 2.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 16 (I, §2); CWES XI, p. 20.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 17 (I, §2); CWES XI, p. 21.

absolute in that toward which both of these point for the explanation of their existence. Both of the latter announce themselves in the former in virtue of their transcendence, their reality, or material fullness (*Fülle*), and all admit of a meaning to potency and act.

To investigate whether this meaning is purely formal, and also what this would mean, the first analysis pertains to formal ontology.<sup>81</sup> When absolute, spiritual, and material being are said to be different forms of being, to be different with regard to their actualization of being, what is meant is that they are different “fillings” (*Ausfüllungen*) of the empty form of being, and this indicates that a purely formal analysis will not suffice to clarify what is meant by potency and act, since they reach across, as different “fillings,” to material ontology.<sup>82</sup> The distinction between formal and material ontology reflects the distinction between form and content, again reflecting the function of specification of the genus. Ontological forms—*Leerformen*—such as “something,” “what,” and “being,” can be analyzed as empty forms, because as such they are susceptible to specification. But act and potency are not empty forms in this manner: act and potency pertain to the content, and are not susceptible to specification.<sup>83</sup> As formal differentiations of being, potency means “a being referring to an other (actual) being.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, “these modes of being are to be elucidated formally as well as materially only in connection with the being they correspond to,” and thus material ontology must be called upon.<sup>85</sup> This is why Stein’s analysis of potency and act must take the form of a presentation of the analogy of being, of act and potency as bearing on spirit, nature, and their presupposition in absolute being. A purely formal analysis is not possible.

*Potency and Act* sees Stein work with several of her characteristic ideas: the ontological status of ideal or essential being, knowl-

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., II.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., II, §1, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., II, § 4, p. 37; CWES XI, p. 51: “*In actu esse* [being in act] and *in potentia esse* [being in potency] are modes of being, material fulfillments of the form of being, hence as such they need to be elucidated in a material ontology.”

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 51–52: “But at the same time they designate formal differences of being; namely, ‘*in potentia esse*’ designates a being that refers to another (actual) being.”

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 52. Translation slightly adapted.

edge of the individual, in particular of the human individual, the nature of matter, the core of the person, evolution and life. It also sees her work with several of her characteristic interlocutors, Thomas Aquinas, Edmund Husserl, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, and Martin Heidegger. The contrasting of the scholastic and the phenomenological approach already yields significant results: the phenomenologically experienced unity of the I reveals Aquinas' understanding of the immateriality of the soul to be in stark contrast with the idea that what individuates everything, and thus also the soul, should be matter. The absolute being of the I, as underlined by Husserl, makes it impossible to avoid the ontological investigation (of the *being* of the I) to which Aquinas' contributes.

The habilitation attempt did not succeed in giving Stein access to an academic position: her ability was granted on grounds of previous work, but her financial situation prevented her from completing the project.<sup>86</sup> Finally Stein was offered a position at the Marianum teacher training college in Münster, which she took in 1932, a position she would hold only until the Nazis came to power in 1933.

#### *Education of the human being*

In the year at the Marianum, Stein drew on her practical engagement for the educational development of the human being to write a theory of education, which understandably amounts to an analysis of the structure of the human person: *Aufbau der menschlichen Person*.<sup>87</sup> This series of lectures was complemented by a theological approach: *Was ist der Mensch?*, which comments on the dogmatic declarations concerning the nature of the human being. This work explicitly deals with the questions about the destiny and origin of the human soul, the purpose of human life, and the meaning of death, which had to be left open for the purely philosophical investigation.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Letter to Ingarten, ESGA 4, letter 163.

<sup>87</sup>Mette Lebeck, "Edith Stein's Philosophy of Education in *The Structure of the Human Person*," in *What Price the University?* ed. Thomas Kelly (NUIM, 2006), 163–77.

<sup>88</sup>Kant also thought that the regulative ideas of reason (immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and the unity of the world) were *noumena*, which lay open for us to affirm only through the moral law of the categorical imperative.

It is perhaps important that the latter volume did not emerge out of lectures, but was written after Stein had been affected by the expected ban on Jewish professionals. The mood of the volume is contemplative, and lets the dogmatic declarations on the human being shine forth in the formative influence that Christian teaching has had on the development of European thought. The method employed here is as before: through the texts to the things themselves, in this case the human being seen in the light of faith in Jesus Christ.

The importance of Christian faith and theology for the completion of philosophical anthropology becomes a key to Stein's later work, as she gives up believing that the ultimate philosophical questions can be settled without recourse to faith. This happens at a time when she also gives up believing that there is a place for her "in the world" and responds to a vocation "outside" the world, where she had long longed to be. She is allowed to enter the Carmel in Cologne without a dowry and appears to have settled with gratitude into the hidden life.

### *III. The later philosophy*<sup>89</sup>

Sister Teresia Renata, the novice mistress and subprioress at Mary Queen of Peace, somewhat unexpectedly encouraged Stein to finish *Potency and Act* for publication, having a high regard for Stein's abilities and for what she must have seen as Stein's special mission. As Stein undertook this work, her external circumstances had changed: she no longer was under an economic obligation to teach or to pursue a career, time was regularly given over to writing, and the quiet disengagement from the world left her room to think and study within the safe, but austere, haven of a religious community.

Compared to *Potency and Act*, *Finite and Eternal Being* takes a different direction already after chapter II, where the consideration of formal ontology is replaced by a phenomenological analysis of essence and essentiality.<sup>90</sup> This is due to the fact that for Stein, *form*

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<sup>89</sup>This period includes the finalization of the autobiography, two volumes of devotional writings (ESGA 19–20), *Finite and Eternal Being* (ESGA 11–12), the translation and commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius (ESGA 17), and the final work *Science of the Cross* (ESGA 18).

<sup>90</sup>Stein conducts this inquiry in dialogue with Jean Hering: "Bemerkungen über

along with *matter* now seems secondary to essence (and with form and matter the distinction between formal and material ontology<sup>91</sup>). Then a long and close discussion of Aristotle follows, stretching over the 120 pages of chapter IV, with the purpose of determining the relationship between the Aristotelian concept of essence (*to ti en einai*) and the phenomenological one just expanded upon. In the course of this investigation the concepts of substance and form are equally discussed to determine their relevance for the phenomenological concept of essence, and the ideas of matter, mass, and material (*Stoff*) are compared, so as to clarify the Aristotelian concept of matter on the one hand and penetrate toward (the procedure is well-known by now) an adequate understanding of concreteness, and of the bearer (*hupokeimenon*, *Träger*) of the being and its essence on the other. It is the discussion of the bearer that opens up the later discussions of the person in the last chapters. The discussion of Aristotle's concepts of essence and substance thus serves to clarify how Stein thinks that the phenomenological concept of essence more adequately accounts for our experience, and to highlight the problems she sees with the Aristotelian one.

Having discussed essence in relation to concreteness, Stein turns in chapter V toward being as such, i.e., toward the transcendentals: the being something, one, true, good, and beautiful of everything. The divisions of being into spirit, nature, and infinite being reveals all being, transcendent and immanent, as standing in a potential (or real) relationship with spirit (everything stands in a relationship with the divine spirit), and hence opens up the possibility of everything being true and good, i.e., of everything being known and being appreciated for what it is. Here she also discusses

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das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* IV, p. 495ff.

<sup>91</sup>The distinction between form and content, empty form and fulfillment or "filling," now moves to the forefront to account for the family likenesses of things. Form and content are distinct through the type of understanding (*Anschauung*) we can have of them: the content when contemplated allows the spirit to come to rest in the ultimate essentialities, the abstracted form refers beyond itself because of its emptiness and hence does not allow the spirit to rest in the same way. See *Endliches und ewiges Sein* (ESGA 11–12) V, § 2, p. 242. This, however, does not cancel the idea of formal ontology: "Alles seiende ist Fülle in einer Form. Die Formen des Seienden herauszustellen ist die Aufgabe der Wissenschaft, die Husserl als 'formale Ontologie' bezeichnet hat" (ibid., 243).

the being of the relationship in which the spirit embraces being. Knowledge, insofar as it is a relationship to the object, “helps to build up the what of knowledge and is condition of its reality.”<sup>92</sup> It belongs to all being to be open to be the object of such knowledge: that is what is meant by characterizing truth as a transcendental. “Being is (even if its full meaning is not exhausted by this) being revealed to the spirit.”<sup>93</sup>

The meaning of being treated in chapter VI relies on this division internal to being between nature and spirit, which allows being a meaning, i.e., a “being for,” a “being revealed.” This meaning amounts to being as such standing in a definite relationship with a certain type of being, namely spirit, and thus it amounts to a being of internal relationship, itself intelligible, like being, and intelligible because it *is*.

Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* also addressed the meaning of being.<sup>94</sup> In the introduction to *Potency and Act* Stein noted that her way of asking the question might make the reader consider the work a critique of Heidegger.<sup>95</sup> The appendix to *Finite and Eternal Being*, “The Existential Philosophy of Martin Heidegger,”<sup>96</sup> gives an explicit critique of Heidegger, written as a result of comparing the approaches of Heidegger and Conrad-Martius after the body of *Finite and Eternal Being* had been completed.<sup>97</sup> With regard to the question

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<sup>92</sup>*Endliches und ewiges Sein* (ESGA 11–12), V, § 10, p. 254. My translation.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 258. My translation.

<sup>94</sup>Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), first printed 1926. The introduction is entitled: “Die Exposition der Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein.”

<sup>95</sup>“The way the author poses questions in this work and some of her attempts to solve them might suggest that it is a critical response to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. In fact, the personal circumstances of her life in recent years have yet to allow her such an—explicit—concern. She did, however, work through *Sein und Zeit* [*Being and Time*] soon after it was published [1927], and the strong impression the book made on her may linger in the present work” (*Potency and Act*, CWES XI, p. 4 [Author’s Foreword]; ESGA 10, Vorwort, p. 5).

<sup>96</sup>At the moment available online in my translation, awaiting publication by ICS Publications.

<sup>97</sup>*Finite and Eternal Being* (CWES IX), p. xxxi; ESGA 11–12, Vorwort, p. 7: “Though the first acquaintance with Heidegger’s great work dates back many years, certain reminiscences may have found their way into this present study. The desire, however, to confront these two decidedly different approaches to the meaning of being [Conrad-Martius’ and Heidegger’s] was not felt until after the

about the meaning of being, *Finite and Eternal Being* situates itself between these two approaches, with Stein taking a position closer to Conrad-Martius, but by no means uncritical of it.<sup>98</sup>

Stein regards Heidegger as reducing the question concerning being to the question concerning the unredeemed human being.<sup>99</sup> Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein* as the meaning of being, in understanding and explanation, and the being of *Dasein* as care concentrates the being question in being-to-death, without, according to Stein, giving a proper account of death, which would allow us to understand *Dasein* and thus being in its entirety.<sup>100</sup> Although Stein agrees that the human being with its I provides a privileged point of departure for the investigation, the being that is met already in the being of the I itself is experienced as a part transcending the I. The meaning of being thus transcends the I, and is found equally in the being of the I and in the being that transcends the I.<sup>101</sup> The meaning of being, i.e., being insofar as it can be

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conclusion of the work. This explains why the section dealing with Heidegger's philosophy of existence has been appended."

<sup>98</sup>In *Potency and Act* the entire Section VI was conducted "in contrast with *Metaphysischen Gespräche* by H. Conrad-Martius," according to its title.

<sup>99</sup>"I know of no better expression for this way of being, which he calls *Dasein* and understands to pertain to all human beings, than *unredeemed being*" (*Endliches und ewiges Sein*, ESGA 11–12, Appendix: *Martin Heideggers Existentialphilosophie*, p. 480/"Martin Heidegger's Existential Philosophy," trans. Mette Lebeck, *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 2007, ed. Cyril McDonnell, p. 81 [B, 2]). "It can hardly be doubted that Heidegger wants to understand *Dasein* as *the human kind of being*" (*ibid.*, p. 463/p. 69 [B, 1]).

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 472/p. 75 (B, 2): "Finally: could we speak about having grasped the ontological essence of death as long as one leaves it open whether it is the end of *Dasein* or the transition from one mode of being to another? (We must here understand the word *Dasein* as Heidegger has used it in the entire previous investigation, to mean not only the end of earthly existence but the end of human beings as such). Is this not rather the decisive question concerning the meaning of death and therefore decisive for the meaning of *Dasein*? Should it transpire that no answer to the question is to be gained from the analysis of *Dasein*, then it would be shown that the analysis of *Dasein* is incapable of clarifying the meaning of death and thus of giving sufficient information concerning the meaning of *Dasein*."

<sup>101</sup>*Endliches und ewiges Sein*, ESGA 11–12, Chapter II, § 2, p. 42; CWES IX, p. 37: "If, in turning upon itself, the intellect contemplates the simple fact of its own being, it reads in this fact a threefold question: [1] What is that being of which I am conscious? [2] What is that I which is conscious of itself? [3] what is that intellectual

revealed, may presuppose the spirit, i.e., the possibility of awareness of being. But being cannot be reduced to a kind of being, and not this kind of being (*Dasein*—the human being) either. The question of being is first, and for there to be a question of the meaning of being, being has to be, and be that to which there is meaning, even if this meaning consists in being revealed to the kind of being which is spirit.

What is common to the meaning of (all finite) being (where essence and being differ) is that it is:

*unfolding of a meaning; essential being is timeless unfolding beyond the difference between potency and act; real being is unfolding out of an essential form, from potency to act, in time and space; the being of thought is unfolding in several senses: the original arising of the thought structure is temporal like the movement of thought, through which it is structured. The “finished” structures have, however, something of the timelessness of the beings according to which they were structured, and in which they always were “possible.” On the other hand, the possibility of a new thought movement is founded in every thought structure, through which it can be recreated and gain new being in a thinking spirit (...).*<sup>102</sup>

Apart from unfolding, which is just another name for being, it also is, in accordance with its transcendental characteristics, one, true, good, beautiful, and something—something with content (*erfülltes*). “We mean this complete fullness when we talk of ‘being.’ But a finite spirit cannot comprehend this fullness fully. It is the infinite task of insight.”<sup>103</sup>

The contrast between formal and material ontology—between form and content—is replaced by one of ideal and real being. The idea of being as a hierarchy or ladder is abandoned, and being is seen as instead reflecting a circular movement of mutual implication (that of the Trinity) in spirit, nature, and absolute being.

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movement in which I am and in which I am conscious of both myself and the movement itself?” Translation adapted.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., VI, § 1, pp. 284–85 (my translation). The corresponding passage is CWES IX, p. 331.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 286: “We mean this total fullness when we speak of ‘being.’ But a finite spirit is never able to apprehend this fullness in the unity of a fulfilling intuition. It is the infinite task of a our knowing” (my translation). The corresponding passage is CWES IX, p. 332.

The meaning of being is approached as the happening and valuing of this reflection as experienced. The struggle with the principle of individuation turns into praise of the meaning of each individual being, and in particular of the individual human being. Thinking through act and potency to finite and eternal being has made the analogy of being unfold like a flower, with leftovers from both the phenomenological and the scholastic traditions falling away like husks. This is an attempt to ascend to the meaning of being, as the subtitle indicates, no longer by penetrating to the meaning of act and potency (as in *Potency and Act*), but by penetrating experience to the meaning of being itself. The rewriting of *Potency and Act* made Stein accomplish a shift in presuppositions: as the concepts of form and matter were replaced, a new phenomenological ontology became possible. Insofar as hylomorphism is not essential to Thomism, one can call her ontology Thomistic. More centrally however, it is an attempt to advance Christian philosophy in the tradition of the *philosophia perennis*.

#### *Science of the Cross*

Stein's name in religion was Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, to signify, no doubt, what she sensed to be the most formative influences in her life and vocation. To be blessed by suffering is something even language seems to rebel at: to maintain that there is a science of it, or indeed that the idea of science itself relies on it stops the mind in its tracks. It is the idea of the deepening of the soul, or the soul accessing its own depths, out of which it is energized by the highest values and completely hidden from surface life, that allows us to understand that precisely this soul sees reality more clearly than the one who lives on the surface and is swayed by power.<sup>104</sup> This deepening happens through suffering, as the soul

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<sup>104</sup> *Kreuzeswissenschaft*, ESGA 18 II, b, δ, p. 133; CWES VI, 13, d, p. 160 (Unfortunately the CWES translation breaks up the list of content which makes the translation difficult to use in conjunction with the original text.): "Human beings are called upon to live in their inmost region and to have themselves as much in hand as is possible only from that center-point; only from there can they rightly come to terms with the world. Only from there can they find the place in the world that has been intended for them." Also see ESGA 18, p. 137/CWES, p. 164: "an ultimately appropriate decision can be made only at the extreme depth of

attempts to find deeper sources of power to energize its life depleted by pain, whether spiritual, psychological, or physical.

The soul may, even without suffering, turn toward the spiritual ground out of which it grows, the depths which, as God, are beyond it and yet are where it is most at home with itself.<sup>105</sup> It is more likely to happen, however, as a result of being prevented from dwelling in the “outer rooms” of the “interior castle,” i.e., as a result of experiencing a mismatch between what comes from the outside and the satisfaction I need or expect from it.<sup>106</sup> That it is only in the “seventh chamber” that the soul has itself completely in hand in freedom and consequently freely can move about in itself and into the world, is, according to Stein, reconcilable with this being the state in which the soul freely leaves everything to God, and hence is entirely passive in letting his love work itself out through it.<sup>107</sup>

Thus the Cross, in the shape of the dark night of the soul, enables the person to see the world as it really is, not as it is for this or that purpose, but as it is in itself: the communication of the love that is divine being. Stein’s engagement with science as an ideal here finds its endpoint in something beyond it, without which it could not operate as an ideal, but which for that matter no less lies outside what can be an object of science. The science of the Cross involves the subject to the point of its own annihilation and abandonment into the meaning of being. The paradox is that this abandonment represents a foundation for knowledge.

### *Autobiography*

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soul.”

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., II, b,  $\alpha$ – $\gamma$ , pp. 126–32; here, 127; CWES 13, 2, a, p. 154: “A created spirit can only ascend to him by transcending itself. However, since he bestows being on all that has being, and preserves it in being, God is the sustaining ground of everything. Whatever ascends to him descends at the same time, by that very act, into its own center or resting place.”

<sup>106</sup>These references to the interior castle and its rooms refer to Teresa of Avila’s work of the same name, to which Stein devoted another appendix in *Finite and Eternal Being*.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., II, b,  $\delta$ , pp. 135–36.

Stein had wanted to complete her autobiography when she arrived in Echt, having fled Germany. The final annotations to the manuscript are dated from the first anniversary of Husserl's death (27 April 1939).<sup>108</sup> It may be that she still considered the possibility of finishing that work, as the Gestapo collected her for her final transport *ad orientem*. Stein's characteristic manner of simply ending the work (instead of summarizing and concluding it), is reflected in the fact that it remains unclear whether either *Science of the Cross* or the autobiography is in fact finished. Perhaps the reluctance to conclude came from the fact that she did not know what was next, but did know that there were something next, that any conclusion is but a pause in a continuous process having its *telos* behind the curtain of death, perhaps in the mystery of God. That there is no conclusion gives room for interpretation, and for the possibility that the conclusion can be hoped for from elsewhere. Probably Stein hoped and waited for every word in her last works, and had come to expect that their unfinished state itself was a reflection of the reality she attempted to convey. The idea of writing oneself out of oneself by writing an autobiography is in a strange sense the mirror image of the *Science of the Cross*: this is what I think I am, it must be given up to become what it shall be and for me to become who I am. Thus the disconcerting lack of closure nevertheless leaves us something to conclude and thus poses the question of what we want to conclude.

*Why do we need Stein's philosophy?*

To answer this question we had to begin by a reflection on the nature of *need*. We found we had knowledge of need from three sources: inner, outer, and objective—from the subjective experience of need, from the experience of others in need, and from our understanding of the whole lacking some of its elements.

Stein's philosophy in fact fills an inner need, in that it allows us to see that philosophy is not just a competition of worldviews issuing in a war of words, but that it is possible to discern what is true in different worldviews (those of classical and modern thought in particular) by criticizing them by means of one another. Without such attempts at mediating different worldviews, philosophical dialogue breaks down and with it our ability to understand the world

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<sup>108</sup>Editor's Foreword, *Life in a Jewish Family*, CWES 1.

philosophically. Philosophy itself has the need of being able to contribute something meaningful in order to be itself, and we need philosophy to be meaningful in order to make sense of life. Stein's attempt at mediating between traditions thus contributes toward safeguarding the meaningfulness of philosophy and toward enabling us to trust in the meaningfulness of life.

Stein's philosophy also fills an outer need, in that it enables us to begin to interpret the complexities of social life as it is rooted in the different dimensions of the human being. Here the needs of the other are seen in their social context, which sometimes thematizes and magnifies them and sometimes disregards and deletes them. We need Stein's philosophy to clarify to ourselves the manner in which the social world is constructed and real and to understand the way in which we participate in this construction and reality, so as to be able to justly assess the needs of others as well as our own. We need to be able to do this to find a path of freedom in the midst of social constraints and expectations that are not always rooted in respect for the integrity of the human being.

Stein's philosophy finally fills an objective need, in that it suggests a view of the whole, of the world, of the human being and of humanity, that can aid us in building a plausible view of the whole in the light of which we can judge plausibly about need. To Stein this view includes the contribution of Christian revelation, which we need insofar as she is right that without it, no view of the whole can be accomplished with regard to the beginning and end of the human being, as well as the meaning of the world as a whole. We thus need Stein's philosophy to contribute to a contemporary philosophical anthropology as much as toward a contemporary ontology.

Stein's honesty and integrity in her search speak for themselves. □

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