The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy

Daniele De Santis, Burt C. Hopkins, Claudio Majolino

Edith Stein

Publication details
Antonio Calcagno
Published online on: 25 Aug 2020

How to cite :- Antonio Calcagno. 25 Aug 2020, Edith Stein from: The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy Routledge
Accessed on: 27 Jun 2023

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Much of the scholarly literature on the philosophy of Edith Stein focuses on her later philosophical project, which sought to synthesize both phenomenology and Christian philosophy to arrive at a fuller understanding of being. Recently, scholars and philosophers have turned to Stein’s earlier body of work, which is more strictly phenomenological (Burns 2015; Zahavi 2010; and Moran 2004). The predilection on the part of scholars for Stein’s later work can be attributed to two important factors. First, Stein is revered by many Christians as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. She was canonized by John Paul II on October 11, 1998. Her later work was relevant to those working in Christian philosophy and theology: scholars used Stein’s corpus to advance ideas and claims in these fields. Second, phenomenologists and philosophers in general conceived, and wrongly so, I might add, of Stein’s phenomenological investigations as simply being derivative of her teacher Edmund Husserl’s work. Some thought of her simply as Husserl’s secretary and editor, for example, Martin Heidegger (Bernet 1985). Moreover, sexism in philosophy hindered the study of Stein’s early phenomenological thought. Whereas male figures in the early phenomenological tradition received due attention, including Adolf Reinach, Roman Ingarden, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Max Scheler, women phenomenologists, for example, Edith Stein, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Gerda Walther, and Else Vogtländer, were viewed as minor or secondary figures, philosophers who simply repeated in large part what their “masters” taught them (Calcagno 2006). This chapter focuses on Stein the phenomenologist and will explore her original contributions to phenomenology, which include, I argue, a view of meaning-making or sense-bestowal (Konstitution) that is deeply connected with psyche; empathy as a means to self-understanding and to the general understanding of ourselves as persons as well as empathy as a condition for knowledge in the human sciences; and a developed social and political ontology that also includes a unique understanding of woman.

58.1 Setting the stage: a brief biography

Born in 1891 in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland), Edith Stein was the last of eleven children born to Auguste Courant and Siegfried Stein. She was raised in an observant Jewish household and completed both her elementary and secondary education in Breslau, ultimately qualifying to enter the German university system. Stein began her university studies in psychology, history, and German at the University of Breslau in 1910. She became quickly dissatis-
fied with psychology on account of its positivistic and psychologistic tendencies: psychological events and phenomena were either viewed as exclusively empirically quantifiable and measurable phenomena, which reduced psychic events to material, corporeal mechanisms, or as strictly psychic phenomena with limited or no relation to other aspects of the human being, including spirit (i.e., intellect, motivation, and will). Stein felt that the experience of the human mind was much richer than the psychology of her day was willing to admit.

A chance encounter with George Moskiewicz, whom Stein met at her pedagogy seminar, resulted in her friend introducing her to the work of early phenomenology, especially that of Adolf Reinach and Edmund Husserl (MacIntyre 2007, p. 14). Reinach was using insights from the Würzburg school of psychology and applying them to the development of the then-new phenomenological method. Stein was intrigued and began to read Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*. Having completed the first volume, which contains a sustained attack against psychologism, she decided to go and study with Husserl and Reinach at Göttingen. In 1913, Stein was admitted to Husserl’s seminar and Reinach agreed to instruct Stein in the phenomenological method. While studying, Stein also took part in the meetings of the Göttingen Philosophical Society and subsequently met other phenomenologists, including Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Theodor Conrad, Jean Héring, Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden, Alexandre Koyré, and Hans Lipps. Stein describes this time as intensely philosophical and joyous (Stein 1986, p. 421, Kindle edition, location 4039 of 11).

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 inspired many young scholars and university students to volunteer to fight, including Stein’s beloved philosophy teacher Adolf Reinach. Stein herself interrupted her studies to nurse patients at a lazaretto near the front lines. Having heard Husserl’s lectures on nature and spirit, Stein decided to work on the problem of empathy and how it is that we know other minds. Husserl asked that Stein present a historical analysis of the problem as it was taken up in philosophy and psychology as well as a phenomenological analysis of the mental act. In 1916, Husserl was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. Stein decided to move with Husserl in order to complete her doctorate, which she completed *summa cum laude* in 1917. Husserl required an assistant to help him with his work and he asked Stein if she would take on the unpaid role. Stein was very eager to help Husserl and saw her project as one of collaboration with her teacher. She remained with Husserl for about a year and helped prepare and edit a series of his texts, including *Ideas II* and *III*, *Lectures on Thing and Space*, and *Phenomenology and Inner Time Consciousness* (*Hua IV; Hua V; Hua XVI; Hua X*). Stein found her time with Husserl frustrating, for as she would prepare texts for him to read, he either wanted to revise them or simply was not satisfied with what he had written. Stein ultimately decided to stop working for Husserl in 1919. From about 1919–1920, she returned to her native Breslau and began giving private lectures on phenomenology. She tried to acquire a university teaching position (*Habilitation*), but was unsuccessful because of sexism and anti-Semitism prevalent in the university system of her day. In 1922, Stein converted to Roman Catholicism and her close friend and fellow phenomenologist colleague, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, served as her godmother. In 1923, Stein began working at the Dominican Teachers’ College at Speyer. It was at Speyer that Stein undertook a serious study of Christian philosophy. She translated into German various texts by Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal John Henry Newman, and she began to write essays about thinkers like Dionysius the Areopagite (Stein 2000b). Stein also developed a philosophy of education and wrote extensive essays on women’s education and women’s place in society. She became a popular lecturer and toured the German-speaking world addressing questions of women’s education and the role of women in religious life.

Stein’s conversion also assisted the philosopher to express her desire or vocation for religious life. Her spiritual advisors at the time, recognizing her philosophical talents, thought
that she would have a greater impact if she publicly taught and lectured. Stein decided to delay her entry into religious life in order to teach and write. Having tried two more times to acquire a university teaching position in Germany and having failed, Stein finally was appointed Privatdozent at the Pedagogical Institute at Münster, where she was charged with giving lectures in philosophical anthropology.\(^5\) In 1933, Hitler passed the anti-Jewish laws, and Stein was summarily fired from her position. It was at this point that Stein entered Carmel as a religious sister. While in the convent, Stein completed her large work, *Finite and Eternal Being*,\(^6\) which seeks to synthesize phenomenology with Christian philosophy by explaining how one can acquire a complex sense of being, progressing from the most basic forms of being to the highest form, namely, God. In 1938, Stein and her sister Rosa fled Germany and were received at the Carmelite convent at Echt, Holland. While at Echt, Stein wrote her last work, *Science of the Cross*.\(^7\) In 1942, in retaliation for the Dutch bishop’s criticism of the treatment of Jews in Holland by the Nazis, the Nazis rounded up Edith Stein and her sister. Both were murdered in Auschwitz in 1942. In 2000, under the direction of Professor Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, Herder published the complete works of Edith Stein, which now consists of some 28 volumes (Stein 2000-2020).

### 58.2. Stein’s phenomenology and empathy

The Phenomenological Movement (1901–1945) was dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge about things as they appear in reality. Early phenomenologists viewed themselves as combating the predominance of positivistic and psychologistic reductionism in the sciences and philosophy. The Movement was widespread, had many notable philosophers in it, and produced numerous studies and works on all kinds of phenomena, from investigations of various mental acts to social and political ontology to discussion of aesthetics (Spiegelberg 1960). There were three traditional centers of phenomenological investigation: Munich, Göttingen, Freiburg im Breisgau. There are also four founding figures of the Movement: Edmund Husserl, Moritz Geiger, Max Scheler, and Alexander Pfänder. The first three philosophers founded the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*. Edith Stein was at both Göttingen and Freiburg, and had significant familiarity with the works of the Munich school. It could be said that Stein had four major phenomenological influences in the figures of Adolf Reinach, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, and Hedwig Conrad-Martius: it is these four philosophers that shaped her ideas and with whom Stein dialogued in her texts.

Each member of the Movement shared the same philosophical commitment to knowledge about real things in the world, but how they achieved that knowledge was a matter of dispute, as phenomenologists took various positions on the realist–idealist tension present within interpretations of the phenomenological method (Ales Bello 2015). If one examines Stein’s strictly phenomenological writings, including *On the Problem of Empathy*,\(^8\) *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*,\(^9\) *An Investigation Concerning the State*,\(^10\) and *Introduction to Philosophy*,\(^11\) her view of phenomenology evolves and changes, moving from a more eidetic, descriptive position to one that is a cross between transcendental phenomenology and formal ontology. Shifts and interpretations surrounding the nature of phenomenology and its method ought not to be read as a failure on the part of phenomenology to secure a stable foundation; rather, the method itself and what phenomenology aimed to do was a matter of rich and philosophical debate, each phenomenologist providing his or her own unique take on the question. Husserl himself changed and developed his phenomenology throughout his lifetime, as each major work published in his lifetime was conceived of as an introduction to phenomenology, especially as his phenomenology moved from its eidetic form to its transcendental one.
Stein’s first major published work in phenomenology, *On the Problem of Empathy* (1918), consisted of the second part of her doctoral dissertation. The first part is no longer extant and was never published. Like in all of her other phenomenological texts, Stein admits that her thought was deeply influenced by the work of her teacher, Edmund Husserl (Stein 1989, 1–2; 2000a, 1–2). Many scholarly articles have been written on why Stein differs from Husserl on various questions, but many of these articles often give the impression that Stein somehow ruptured with phenomenology and Husserl and that she developed her own line of thought distinct from or unfaithful to Husserl. The fact is that Husserl remained a constant influence on Stein and she saw herself as being faithful to his method. Readers must recall that the method itself and how phenomenology was conceived was never fixed or stabilized. It remained and still remains a serious question of philosophical reflection. In many ways, Stein extends Husserl’s insights into new directions, but it would be wrong to say that Stein broke with Husserl and developed an independent philosophy. We see traces of Husserl’s influence in Stein’s late works, especially *Finite and Eternal Being* and in the phenomenological descriptions of the dark night of the soul in *Science of the Cross*.

Husserl began treating the question of empathy in 1905, and some of his insights about empathy were communicated in his lectures on nature and spirit, which Stein attended. When Stein heard these lectures, she took up his suggestion that more work needed to be done on empathy. We know that Husserl greatly admired Stein’s work on empathy, praising it in his evaluation of her dissertation (Husserl 2017). Scheler also addressed Stein’s work in his *The Nature of Sympathy* (Scheler 2008, 213–264). Stein describes empathy as a *sui generis* act of mind in which one can bring the mind of the other into relief in one’s own consciousness (1986, 10–11). In order for an empathic act to occur, certain knowledge must be present. Empathy requires knowledge seized through both self- or internal perception as well as external perception (6–8). The former yields knowledge of one’s own inner states or awareness; for example, I can perceive the intensity of a certain affect on me, say joy or sadness (10). I know what it is for me to experience these states. I am also aware of my own body, how I experience it in and through the senses. I also experience sensations or sense impressions that communicate feelings like fatigue or liveliness. The latter form of perception makes immediately present to consciousness realities that lie outside my own sphere of immanence; for example, I can perceive objects in the world or events or other persons. In fact, others are co-given to me immediately in external perception and I immediately grasp that they are like me. In an act of empathy, my I intends what the other is experiencing and I bring the other’s mind into my own consciousness. Stein gives the example of experiencing and understanding the sadness of another (10). She learns that a friend’s family member has passed away and sees the body of the other, perceives the expression and the timber of the voice. I rightfully understand that the other is sad, but in order to do so, I have to take what the other presents and presentify it in my own consciousness. I use eidetic variation to read what the other is experiencing as sadness at the loss of a person (Stein 1986, 102; 2000a, 134), and as I try to bring the other’s mind to my consciousness, I analogically compare what I have seized from the other to my own knowledge acquired through internal and external perception. I know what the other is experiencing is sadness because I compare what I grasp from the other with my own experience of sadness. Empathy, then, allows one to bring the mind of the other to my own consciousness, but it also allows us to understand sadness in general. In fact, the other can modify my own understanding of sadness in general or any object of consciousness. Stein, like Husserl, admits that empathy has the power to constantly modify our own experience and understanding of self, other, and objective phenomena.

Though Husserl wrote much about empathy, as we see from his Nachlass, he has, however, no sustained account of it in works published in his own lifetime. He makes references to it in vari-
ous texts like the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, but he always struggled with the concept and what it could deliver. What is novel about Stein’s account is not so much the description she gives of the act, for empathy as a kind of analogical trading places of minds can be found in Husserl as well, but what it purports to do. Stein uniquely positions empathy as being able to achieve four things. First, it can give one self-knowledge. Second, it yields knowledge of other minds. Third, it can help us grasp certain objectivities unique to human beings, such as our personhood. Finally, empathy can serve as the unique phenomenological act that can serve as the foundational epistemic act that allows us to acquire knowledge in the human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften) as well as the natural sciences; for example, medicine. Husserl was always looking to ground his phenomenology as the foundational science. Stein’s empathy as a foundational epistemic act can be read as extending Husserl’s wish. It should be remarked that Stein changes her view on empathy as an act of mind foundational for the sciences by the time she writes her Introduction to Philosophy, for in this text empathy becomes a limited act that only can yield knowledge about certain aspects of one’s interiority (Calcagno 2017).

Most scholarship on Stein’s investigation of empathy ignores her discussion of the human sciences and psychology found at the end of the text. Empathy, according to Stein, allows us to understand what it is for human beings to be persons. To be a person is to live a special and unique kind of unity, namely the unity of body, psyche, and spirit. Stein claims that the realm of spirit is unique to human beings and is the realm of human activity where freedom, the will, reason, and motivation work together to produce specific kinds of objects, including objects that belong to religion, politics, love, and history (1986, 93). Stein remarks, “As it pursues the formative process of spiritual production, we find the spirit itself to be at work. More exactly, a spiritual subject empathically seize another and brings its operation to givenness to itself” (Ibid.). Dialoguing with Dilthey, Stein remarks that empathy allows one to enter into the mind of another spiritual being and we can understand the product of that other through empathy. Empathy, then, becomes foundational for the human or spiritual sciences, as it grants us access to uniquely human undertakings like our own lived sens of history, religion, politics, and art. But Stein even goes further, for as she shows in her text, empathy is necessary for us to understand our psycho-physical constitution as persons. Empathy allows us to understand causality, an if→then relation between states of affairs, which is the mechanism that allows us to understand how affectivity works, and empathy allows us to understand how it is that the other lives her own lived body (70–73). For example, I understand the onset of a certain emotional state of affairs, say sadness or joy, as arising or being caused by certain events or circumstances. The understanding of how causality works and brings about certain results allows me to apply the logic of causality to understand how it may be that one is experiencing a certain state of mind or experience. If this is the case, then empathy is important for the natural sciences, including psychology and sciences like medicine and anatomy (95). Stein takes up Husserl’s critique of the reductionistic psychologistic and positivistic sciences that make room neither for the life of spirit and its expressions nor for the need for empathy for the natural scientist to be aware of how she comports herself vis-à-vis others, nor for the knowledge of physical objects and phenomena seized through empathy, including the psyche and the lived body. Empathy, for Stein, allows us to develop a typology that can guide us in understanding ourselves as embodied-psycho-spiritual unities that produce unique objects and structures. She remarks,

As natural things have an essential underlying structure, such as the fact that empirical spatial forms are realizations of ideal geometric forms, so there is also an essential structure of the spirit of ideal types. Historical personalities are empirical realization of these types. If empathy is the perceptual consciousness in which foreign persons come
to givenness for us, then it is also the exemplary basis for obtaining this ideal type, just as natural perception is the basis for eidetic knowledge of nature. We must therefore find access to these problems from the point of view of our considerations.

(95–96)

58.3. Psychology

The discussions of the relation between the natural sciences and the spiritual or human sciences found at the end of her treatment of empathy is once again taken up in Stein’s second work, Philosophy of Psychology and the Human Sciences (2000a, 117–128). Whereas in Stein’s first text on empathy, the natural and spiritual/human sciences require empathy as a foundational act of knowledge, in her second work, the relationship between the natural and human sciences is reframed. Stein wishes to establish an intimate connection between the psychic (nature) and the spiritual (human/culture) (115–116). In fact, these two domains are interlaced with one another, and the sciences must not split these two aspects of our personhood. The first part of Psychology and the Humanities demonstrates how psyche and consciousness are interrelated, and how this interrelationship is important for the relationship between psyche and spirit (74–116). Stein’s argument for the interrelationship of psyche and spirit can be interpreted not only as a critique of psychologistic and positivistic tendencies in psychology and the natural sciences, but also as a critique of Husserl’s own project. Though Husserl privately wrote and lectured about the relationship between psyche and spirit, he was reluctant to publish anything in his lifetime about it, as it would compromise the transcendental purity of his project, which needed to make a fine break with the empirical sciences and empirical data. The Husserl that Stein knew and worked with was struggling to defend the transcendental idealism of Ideas I and the logic of the Logical Investigations. Stein was convinced of the need for a discussion of the interrelation between the natural/psychic and the spiritual that she arranged Ideas II and III to show how these realms were to be interrelated, knowing that Husserl would find this troublesome. She confesses her “heresy” to Roman Ingarden in a letter, admitting that she sees the need for phenomenology to better explain the relation between the two realms (Stein 1993, cited from Kindle edition, location 707 of 7742). Husserl was never satisfied with Stein’s texts and he never published them in his lifetime.

The first part of Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities is called “Psychic Causality.” The text opens with the claim that consciousness is lived as a seamless stream of experience in which experiences flow one into the other, often with no clear distinction of a beginning or an end (Stein 2000a, 9). And though consciousness wholly admits of the intentionality and the noematic structures Husserl uncovers in his own work, Stein claims that consciousness itself also is influenced by another force, namely, psyche (14–21). Psyche is structured much like phenomena of nature in that it largely moves in a causal way (22–25), as discussed previously. Whether at the level of sensation, emotion/affect, or instinct/drive, psyche works in such a way that a certain stimulus will produce a certain response: there is a cause and effect structure that is primary and defining of psyche. Sensations of pain, the emotions of joy or sadness, or even the experience of drives compelling us to behave in a certain fashion will have an impact on how we experience both consciousness and the objects it intends. For example, fatigue will cause our conscious experience of our own mental acts and the objects of mind to appear with less intensity (18). Psyche colors our consciousness. Moreover, the life force, which manifests primarily in psyche, will also affect consciousness. If we are ill and weak, for example, the force of life is weak in us and will diminish consciousness’ capacity to carry out mental (and phenomenological) acts as well as experience objects of reality.

Stein argues that the phenomenon of motivation, value-formation, and willing manifest the interconnection between psyche and spirit. To be motivated to do something is not the same...
as being driven by instinct (79–83). The latter suspends any role for the will in assenting to or declining the force of motivation. In motivation, often psychic affects will accompany a motivation, and though there is a psychic affect, motivation will often draw upon judgment and reason (all acts that lie within the domain of spirit) in order that the will may freely respond to what motivation brings forward (87–91). For example, I learn that someone I know requires books to carry on further study. The person has no money, but I have the funds to help. A situation arises, and I may feel sympathy for the person and I may even empathize with the other's desire for further study. I feel sad that the other person cannot study. Reason tells or motivates me that I can afford to pay and I freely decide or will to help the person. Motivation and will work together with affects in order to complete an action of response and generosity. Likewise, values are formed at the intersection of psyche and spirit. For example, certain feelings of attraction or repulsion toward a specific phenomenon may create certain feelings of pain and/or pleasure vis-à-vis a certain person, act or object (75). Persistent feelings over time may permit me to form an awareness that I care about a certain thing in a certain way. My care signifies that I value something. The value formed, however, is not simply a feeling. I can reason and even will to invoke the value manifest in feelings in different situations. For example, I profoundly dislike seeing someone suffer any kind of pain. I can form a general value from this affective experience, and declare that pain and discomfort must be alleviated. I reason that anytime I encounter such pain and discomfort, I must try to help alleviate them. I choose to do so and I also reason and judge how and why it is appropriate to do so in different situations. For Stein, the interworking of psyche and spirit mean that nature and spirit are intimately bound up with one another, especially when it comes to the life and products of the human person. If nature and spirit work together, then the sciences of nature and spirit/humanities must also work together: one cannot be reduced to the other, nor can they work separately. Ultimately, Stein, like Husserl, sees phenomenology as providing the best scientific standpoint that can best accommodate the demands of both the natural and spiritual/human sciences. Again, however, though Husserl's Nachlass may be read as supporting such a point of view, we also find the public Husserl, who insists on a transcendental foundation that is real, but free from empirical or natural causality. Husserl certainly can give a phenomenological or formal ontological account of natural phenomena and the sciences, but is reluctant to admit a purely empirical, descriptive role.

58.4. Social ontology

Empathy serves as the foundational act that gives us knowledge of ourselves and others as well as certain objectivities in the world, especially spiritual objects created by human will, reason, and freedom. But empathy is essentially an interpersonal structure, which permits person to person understanding. One of Stein’s great and more original contributions to phenomenology and philosophy is her social ontology. In the second part of Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities, Stein presents an account of another form of lived experience, which she calls the lived experience of community or Gemeinschaftserlebnis (133). In the lived experience of a community, one lives in the experience of another life in solidarity with a group (130–131). Stein gives the example of the death of a much-loved troop leader (134–135). When the troops learn of the death of their leader, empathy allows one to understand what it is for each individual to experience sadness and grief caused by loss. But in the lived experience of community, which is the most intense form of sociality, one not only feels the individual’s sense of grief but also the collective grief, the grief of the community as a whole. Here, the individual enters into and experiences the collective life of the troop. Stein remarks, “Certainly I the individual ego am filled up with grief. But I feel myself to be not alone with it. Rather, I feel it as our grief” (134).
Though Stein identifies community as the most intense form of sociality, she also describes two other forms of sociality that are less intense. Society is experienced as a collectivity that is moved by and oriented around a shared goal (130–132, 207–208). For example, the Göttingen Philosophical Society met and shared a bond that revolved around philosophical inquiry. Stein admits that community may be experienced within societal organizations. The least intense form of sociality is the mass. The mass act together, but their association is largely based on a kind of naïve interchange or imitation (241–245, 289–291). Stein gives the examples of a group of babies. One baby may start to cry and the others imitate the other baby and begin to cry, even though they may experience no discomfort or dis-ease. Community is experienced as a lived sense of solidarity, and one never fuses with other members of the community to form a whole. Individuals live a collective sense of intense togetherness without losing their individuation.

In order to experience community, individuals must have certain psychic and spiritual capacities. Individuals must be able to experience communal affects, that is, each individual person must be able to distinguish collective affectivity from individual affect (151–157, 223). In the aforementioned example of the troop, there is a distinction between the experience of individual grief and collective grief. One must also possess certain rational and intellectual capacities that enable us to build up a collective understanding of a we (145–150). For example, categorical acts of synthesis allow us to take parts of individual experience and form wholes of collective experience like solidarity. Solidarity requires us to be able to bind individual experiences to form a logical whole called community. Furthermore, to be able to experience community requires us to be able to grasp communalizing acts of the imagination, will, and motivation (169–195). It is impossible to for us to experience the body of a community, especially if we understand community as being the lived experience of a sense of solidarity. A sense or meaning does not have a body. Nonetheless, the imagination can abstract out of individual experience of solidarity as it is lived in the body, for example the collective joy of togetherness and its effects on the body, and imagine what it would be like for a group to live joy bodily. Likewise, in order for us to be able to experience community, we need to be able to experience collective will and motivation. Stein gives the example of political will. The individual members of a political party can experience a collective political will as well as a common motivation pushing members to make the said decision only insofar as we have the capacity to experience collective motivation and make collective decisions (279–285). The lived experience of community is a specific state of mind that allows individual persons to live and experience collective life, thought, affect, and action.

The last form of sociality that Stein treats is that of the state, which is discussed in her work *An Investigation Concerning the State*. The work is a cross between Stein’s own interests in the politics of Weimar Germany and her phenomenology of community. The state is defined as a middle form of community, which lies between more intimate forms of community like the family and more expansive forms as found in the community of humanity (Stein 2006, 7). Stein says that the state community is typified by two foundational traits: sovereignty and the law (7–16). Those that form the state community, and this state community need not be identified with an ethnic group or people, live the bond of solidarity in and around the intimate relation between law-givers and law-followers. Stein adopts Reinach’s a priori theory of law as the highest form of law proper to the life of the state, though states can and do formulate positive laws, that is, laws specific to time and place and the situation of the state (38). A priori laws are laws that are universally justifiable and are not determined by the specificity of place or culture; for example, certain inalienable human rights. Stein’s theory of state community is the preferred form of state, for she criticizes contractarian forms of statehood as assuming universal assent when, in fact, many living in contractarian states never have been allowed to assent to the social contract. In
her later writings, Stein consistently defends community as the preferred and most intense form of sociality that is humanly possible.

Stein’s *On the Problem of Empathy, Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities and An Investigation Concerning the State* can be read together as a developed social ontology. Other phenomenologists contemporary with Stein, including Max Scheler (1973; 2008), Adolf Reinach (1913), and Dietrich von Hildebrand (1955), presented social ontologies, but what is unique about her view is the centrality of community, understood as an intense lived experience of a sense of solidarity where one lives in the life of another, especially in the state, as well as her view of empathy as foundational. Moreover, Stein was the first phenomenologist to include a discussion of the unique role of women in the construction of social ontology. In her writing on woman, she argues that human beings are marked by male and female essential structures. Stein describes female essence as marked by a capacity for empathy (Calcagno 2007), which means that those humans marked by female essence are more inclined to interpersonal relations and, therefore, community. Critics have charged Stein with essentialism, but as Linda Lopez McAlister argues, Stein’s notion of essence is fluid and can manifest itself in a variety of typological forms (1993). Also, Stein, unlike Scheler and Gerda Walther (1923), maintained that the most intense experiences of community never result in the loss of the primacy of the individual: Scheler and Walther argue that the most intense forms of community are experienced as a fusion in which self and other fuse together and become one. For Stein, such a fusion is impossible because every ego has to be present and corporeally individuated in order to make possible a sense-bestowal or, to employ Husserl’s term, constitution.

Stein’s understanding of phenomenology moved from a more eidetic form to one of formal ontology, as developed in her *Introduction to Philosophy*. She, like Husserl, kept refining her idea of what phenomenology could be and achieve. She must be read like her counterparts as contributing to our understanding of the capacity of the mind to acquire philosophical knowledge and insight, but in this dialogue with her fellow phenomenologists Stein comes to unique conclusions about empathy, social ontology, woman, and the interrelationship between consciousness and psychology, and between the natural and human sciences.

**Notes**

1. For example, Sarah Borden’s (2009) excellent study and Maskulak 2007.
2. Subsequently modified by Husserl and eventually published as Hua-Mat IV.
3. These lectures are published as Stein 2010a.
4. Some of Stein’s writings on woman from this period have been collected in Stein 1996.
5. Stein’s lectures are now published in two volumes: Stein 2010b and 2005.
7. Stein 2002b.
12. The narrative of a philosophical rupture between Husserl and Stein is classic and can be found in such early scholarly works as Guilead 1974.
13. Sawicki 2001 is a notable exception.

**References**

Antonio Calcagno


Edith Stein


