

Joyce Avrech Berkman

University of Massachusetts/Amherst, Department of History
jberkman@history.umass.edu

Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy: Edith Stein's Three Turns

Fenomenologia a filozofia chrześcijańska.
Trzy przemiany Edith Stein

ABSTRACT: This essay examines Edith Stein's three phases of religious development in the context of the debate during the 1920s and 30s over the relationship between religion and philosophy. This debate focused on the question of whether a Christian philosophy was an oxymoron. Stein, after her conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1922, identified herself as a Christian Philosopher. She thought that Christianity and Philosophy were reciprocal partners, not antagonists, in the search for fundamental truths of life and death. Stein's three turns, which this essay explores historically and biographically, feature her decision to apply phenomenological philosophical methods and insights to the realm of religion, her move to a Christian perspective and finally her choice of Catholicism as her belief system.

KEYWORDS: Carmelites, Catholic, Christian philosophy, empathy, Husserl, Ingarden, phenomenology, Scheler, Stein, theology

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy esej analizuje trzy fazy rozwoju religijnego Edith Stein w kontekście debaty toczonej w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku na temat relacji pomiędzy religią a filozofią. Debata ta koncentrowała się na kwestii, czy filozofię chrześcijańską należy uznać za oksymoron. Stein, po przejściu na rzymski katolicyzm w 1922 roku, określiła się jako filozofka chrześcijańska. Uważała, że chrześcijaństwo i filozofia nie są dla siebie wzajemnie antagonistami, a partnerami w poszukiwaniu podstawowych prawd o życiu i śmierci. Trzy przemiany duchowe Stein, które esej ten bada pod względem historycznym i biograficznym, odnoszą się do jej decyzji o zastosowaniu fenomenologicznych metod i spostrzeżeń filozoficznych do sfery religii, przeniesienia zainteresowania filozofki na perspektywę chrześcijańską i wreszcie wyboru katolicyzmu jako systemu wiary.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: karmelicy, katolicy, filozofia chrześcijańska, empatia, Husserl, Ingarden, fenomenologia, Scheler, Stein, teologia

On September 12, 1932, the Thomist Society of France held a conference in Juvisy, Seine-et-Oise, a southern suburb of Paris. Only a year before entering the Carmelite convent in Cologne on October 15, 1933, Edith Stein attended and actively participated in this conference. As you can glean from the published proceedings of this Conference, printed in French and German, 35 philosophers participated, mostly from France, six from Germany, while a very few came from Italy and Austria.¹ The conference contributed to a fierce debate that had become official a few years before in meetings and in publications on the question of Christian philosophy, whether the very term *Christian philosophy* is an oxymoron. Of course, the debate of the proper relationship between reason and faith can be traced back to antiquity and the Middle Ages, but only in the 1920s and especially in France during the 1930s, did the debate become a central preoccupation as a result of early twentieth-century developments in both philosophy and theology. At times, the debate was dubbed the French Debate, but, in fact, the debate was European-wide. This particular conference at Juvisy focused on the feasibility of Christian Phenomenology, i.e. whether the relatively new philosophy of phenomenology, defined and founded by Edmund Husserl in the early decades of the twentieth century, and by the 1930s, widely esteemed and adopted by European philosophers, was compatible with Christian theology. The dominant Christian theology of the early thirties drew upon the dramatic revival and translations in the 1920s of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the proliferation of Thomist societies and academic studies. Hence, at Juvisy, a Catholic theology prevailed, though Protestant theologians invoked Aquinas' arguments as well.²

Is there an historical and inherent character to phenomenology that inclines it to Christian philosophy? This debate continues to attract the attention of philosophers. Gregory Sadler, in his study of the 1930s conferences, writes, "In the present day... the possibility and the nature of Christian philosophy still remains an open, complex, and alluring question."³ A vivid example of

¹ Société thomiste, *Proceedings of the Juvisy Conference: Journées d'Etudes de la Société Thomiste 1, Juvisy, 12 September 1932*, Juvisy, 1932. Excerpts translated into English by Gregory B. Sadler, *Reason Fulfilled by Revelations: the 1930s Christian Philosophy Debates in France*, Washington DC 2012. For an example of Edith Stein's discussion of the Juvisy Conference, see: E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 9, transl. K. Reinhardt, Washington DC 2002, 12, and end notes, nos. 18 and 32, 547, 550. Stein mentions the Juvisy conference in a letter, November 11, 1932, to Roman Ingarden: *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 12, transl. H. Candler Hunt, Washington DC 2014.

² B. Sadler, *Reason Fulfilled...*, op. cit., pp. 20, 26–27.

³ Ibidem, p. 36, cf. 45.

this was the international conference, “New Frontiers: Phenomenology and Religion,” at the University of Söderstörn in Sweden in 2008. One outcome of this conference was the volume *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*, edited by Jonna Bornemark and Hans Ruin, published in 2010, which includes an essay on Stein.⁴ This conference arose for two reasons: one, a response to a volume published in 2000 of essays in which the late Dominique Janicaud termed phenomenologists’ application of philosophical methods to religious questions, a “theological turn” about which Janicaud was critical,⁵ and, two, a concern that religious fundamentalism had hijacked critical thinking about religion and inhibited a serious study of the borders between secular and non-secular, religious and non-religious, rational and irrational thinking.⁶

The Debate consists of responses to five critical questions: 1. Is a Christian philosophy possible? 2. What would be its nature? 3. Has there been any genuinely Christian philosophy? 4. If so, is there now any genuinely Christian philosophy? 5. What is the relationship between past and present Christian philosophies? Quite evident was a lack of consensus over definitions of philosophy and of Christian, identities both deeply controversial then and now. Both terms, of course, have a complex, tangled history. What is clear is that various efforts to reconcile faith and revelation with science or natural reason flounder over the matter of which takes priority.

The conflict among the Juvisy participants, mostly but not all Catholics, mostly but not all Thomists, mostly but not all phenomenologists, is divided as follows: those like Heidegger (he did not attend the conference, but influenced the thinking of many there), who rejected the notion of Christian philosophy as “wooden iron,”⁷ and a rejection echoed at Juvisy by such Neo-Scholastic theologians as Mandonnet and Noël. Another in this ideological camp, Bréhier, declared “one can no more speak of Christian philosophy than of Christian mathematics or a Christian physics.”⁸ The problem of the concept of Christian philosophy for various of the philosophers and theologians is that

⁴ J. Bornemark, *Max Scheler and Edith Stein as Precursors of the Turn to Religion within Phenomenology*, [in:] *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*, J. Bornemark, H. Ruin (eds.), Söderstörn 2010, pp. 45–65.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

⁶ J. Bornemark, H. Ruin, *Introduction*, [in:] *Phenomenology and Religion...*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁷ B. Sadler, *Reason Fulfilled...*, op. cit., p. 37, citing Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, end note p. 66.

⁸ B. Sadler, *Reason Fulfilled...*, op. cit., p. 36, citing Emile Bréhier, [in:] *Proceedings* 36. See: E. Bréhier, *Y-a-t’il une philosophie chrétienne?*, “Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale” 38 (1931), no. 4.

for Christians, faith is the ultimate authority for truth, whereas, for philosophers, reason and logic are the ultimate arbiters of truth. For example, Stein and others cite Thomas' belief that both Aristotelian and Arabic philosophy offer enough evidence to show that pure natural reason, unaided by revealed truth, can lead a thinker to a belief in God and ultimately to a Christian philosophy.⁹ But, in the final analysis, faith and revelation can trump natural reason if a conflict between the two arises. For that reason, some of those at Juvisy insisted that philosophy is independent from religion and cannot be merged into the concept of Christian philosophy. They will grant that Christians are often philosophers, e.g. Descartes and Heidegger, but their philosophies are not Christian in nature.

In the other ideological camp that holds Christian philosophy to be a legitimate concept are Maritain, Gilson, Marcel, Stein and Blondel, and others. They pointed out that the Church fathers adopted Christianity as a philosophy because they viewed it as fulfilling the goals of Greek philosophers and because Christian doctrine made use of philosophic concepts.¹⁰ Edith Stein regarded her own work as Christian philosophy.¹¹ Stein, who had immersed herself in Aquinas' thought as she translated from 1925–1929 Aquinas' *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, her translation published in 1931, conformed to the major tenets of those who had no problem with the term. She, following Aquinas along with other medieval theologians, argued that philosophy is essential to the pursuit of wisdom; indeed, Aquinas designated philosophy to be the perfect work of reason. At one point, Stein states:

the term *Christian philosophy* designates not only the mental attitude of the Christian philosopher, not merely the actual doctrinal system of Christian thinkers but, above and beyond these, the idea of a *perfectum opus rationis*. A Christian philosophy in this sense must aspire to a unity and synthesis of all the knowledge which we have gained by the exercise of our natural reason and by revelation.¹²

In this sense, Stein views revelation and faith as indispensable assistants to reason. Faith can stimulate questions and offer ideas about the realm of reality beyond the reaches of reason. Faith enters because those who reason discover

⁹ E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰ B. Sadler, *Reason Fulfilled...*, op. cit., p. 73.

¹¹ B. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, p. 25. See: End Note 18 for Stein's extended discussion of how Christian philosophy differs from theology, 548, and in End Note 32, Stein, citing P. Daniel Feuling, sets forth a definition of philosophy.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

the path of reason insufficient. But she is clear that human beings lack the capacity to grasp any truth confidently. She writes:

Even finite reality can never be exhaustively understood by means of conceptual knowledge, and much less the infinite reality of God... even theology is not a closed nor an absolutely conclusive structural whole. It evolves historically... it must be emphasized that the contents of revelation do not comprise the infinite plenitude of divine truth.¹³

And Stein does not look blindly at theological arrogance. She states, "Grace does not exempt Christian scholars from the need for a solid scientific and philosophic erudition" and adds without such more training, they "fall far behind the achievements of thorough and conscientious non-Christian scholars."¹⁴

In this essay, I dip into aspects of this debate as it appears in Edith Stein's personal and public writings. Among her personal writings, today I will enlist key letters from her correspondence with Poland's eminent philosopher, Roman Ingarden. Since most of my published essays on Edith Stein treat her life decisions, her complex sense of identity, her analysis of the nature of empathy, her distinctive secular and Christian feminism, and her approach to biographical and autobiographical writing, my attention herein addresses the biographical and historical dimensions of her involvement with this question of the legitimacy of a Christian philosophy based upon scientific phenomenological methods and insights. Please note: I am neither a philosopher nor a theologian; I am an historian of ideas and a biographer. I welcome your questions and thoughts following my presentation, some of which you may, among yourselves, better clarify and expand than I can.

Back to Juvisy: By the time that Stein went to Juvisy, she, among philosophers present, was widely honored as a path-breaking phenomenologist. For mostly sexist and possibly antisemitic reasons, scholars, until the past few decades, have marginalized her writings, though she is every bit as original and probing a philosopher as her more famous peer, Heidegger. In fact, Stein was instrumental in the development of Edmund Husserl's thought. She was not just Husserl's brilliant protégé, not just one of his most remarkable doctoral students, not just his hired assistant in deciphering and rewriting his nearly illegible notes on

¹³ Ibidem, p. 26.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 551, end note p. 35. See also: E. Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit. pp. 241, 259–260.

disorganized scraps of paper, but also his collaborator, as Philosopher Antonio Calcagno has established in his various essays and books.¹⁵

Stein's thought on the validity and nature of a Christian philosophy had already begun take form by 1933. In 1929, Stein had contributed an essay to the *Journal of Philosophical and Phenomenological Research's* special issue, a *Festschrift* in honor of Husserl's 70th birthday. Two versions of this essay are extant. In both, she compares the philosophies of Aquinas and Husserl, though in one she imagines the comparison as a dialogue between the two men. Stein's theatrical imagination comes to the fore, as she has Husserl invite Aquinas to sit on the old leather sofa that Husserl prizes, saying "it's quite comfortable and I doubt I'll ever part with it."¹⁶ Then ensues a dialogue, highlighting many important commonalities between the two men and also pointing to insuperable differences. This work is singular in bringing medieval scholarship into dialogue with the Christian philosophy of her time. Erich Przywara, the brilliant and beloved Jesuit theologian and mentor of Edith Stein, evaluated Stein's dialogue as an "astonishing confrontation between Husserl and Aquinas."¹⁷ He prefers the dramatic dialogue version to the one Heidegger permitted to be published that appears in third person and is less captivating. Stein's remarks at Juvisy sustain and expand the ideas that appear in this 1929 essay. Similarly, Stein's remarks at Juvisy anticipate Stein's Christian philosophy as it appears in her *magnum opus*, *Finite and Eternal Being*, begun in 1931, before Juvisy and completed in 1936 during her years as a Carmelite nun in Cologne, Germany.

Similarly, Stein's dialogue reflected at least a decade of her theological turn, if we apply Janicaud's term to the many phenomenologists attracted to theological matters well before the 1930s. In Husserl's oft-quoted letter in 1919 to Rudolf Otto, the author of *The Idea of the Holy*, Husserl wonders about the impact of his phenomenological philosophy on his students. It makes, he says "Protestants out of Catholics and Catholics out of Protestants."¹⁸ His remark should extend

¹⁵ A. Calcagno, *Assistant and/or Collaborator? Edith Stein's Relationship to Edmund Husserl's Ideen II*, [in:] *Contemplating Edith Stein*, J.A. Berkman (ed.), Notre Dame 2006, pp. 243–270. See also: E. Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., February 1918, pp. 85–90.

¹⁶ E. Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, transl. W. Redmond, Washington DC 2000, p. 3.

¹⁷ T.F. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara SJ: His Theology and His World*, Notre Dame 2002, p. 123.

¹⁸ H. Kleuting, *Edith Stein and John of the Cross: An Intellectual and Spiritual Relation from Husserl's Lecture in 1918 to the Gas Chamber of Auschwitz in 1941*, [in:] *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, M. Lebeck, J.H. Gurmin (eds.), Oxford, 2015, p. 472. Kleuting cites Husserl's 1919 letter to Rudolf Otto, published in *Das Mass des Verborgenen, Heinrich Ochsner (1891–1970) zum Gedächtnis*, C. Ochswald and E. Tecklenborg (eds.), Hannover 1981, p. 159. See: J. Bornemark, H. Ruin, *Introduction*, op. cit., p. 7.

to his Jewish students, such as Stein and Scheler among others. Though some of the phenomenologists remained skeptics, both Stein and Scheler became Catholics, and Husserl, a Jew himself, was a convert to Protestantism. Too easily scholars dismiss the rash of conversions of intellectuals over the decades as opportunistic, a means to secure and advance their careers or to spare their families from prejudice and discrimination.

Yet, inherent in the phenomenological method are elements that predispose its followers to consider theological issues. Most studies of Stein's theological turn emphasize her life experiences rather than her philosophical work. I do not want to diminish their importance, and I will review these briefly, but I do not think scholars have given adequate weight to her intellectual fervor and depth. Any perspective Stein adopted needed to satisfy her passion for rational truth, even after she converted and upheld the truths of faith and revelation. My argument is that Stein, in presenting her Christian philosophy (and she called it that), reveals the crucial role phenomenology exerted in sustaining her commitment to the criteria of rational logic, objectivity and fairness.¹⁹ The phenomenological method encourages a self-critical and reflective analysis of how and what we think, be it of natural or supernatural experiences. Husserl directed Stein and his other students to focus on "‘things’ themselves. Perception... appeared as reception, deriving its laws from objects."²⁰ Objects encompassed everything from emotional events and acts of consciousness, to a tree. If all encompassing, then, obviously religious experience falls under the endless breadth of the phenomenological umbrella.

Stein and her peers quarreled over the meaning and implications of phenomenology and increasingly saw its limitations. A philosopher whom Stein often cites and was influential in her thinking and that of her phenomenological peers was Henri Bergson. Although his father was a Polish Jew, Bergson was attracted to Catholicism and scathing in his attacks on rationalist intellectualism in French philosophy.²¹

¹⁹ E. Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, op. cit., p. 9. Stein frequently rebuts those who claim her philosophical and religious views reflect her feelings and fantasies. She agrees with Aquinas and Husserl who assert that philosophy "is a matter of the serious, sober inquiry of reason," and, so too, her turn to religion.

²⁰ E. Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family, 1891–1916: An Autobiography*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 1, L. Gelber, R. Leuven OCD (eds.), transl. J. Koeppel OCD, Washington DC 1986, p. 250.

²¹ E. Sadler, *Reason Fulfilled...*, op. cit., p. 27. As one example, see: Edith Stein letter to Roman Ingarden, January 5, 1917 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., pp. 25–26).

As a phenomenologist, Stein asks: “What is philosophy?”²² Can the means of knowledge themselves be fully known? In effect, phenomenology as a set of philosophical principles and a philosophical method itself deserves critical analysis. And when she and others subjected phenomenology to critical scrutiny, she realized the limits of phenomenology, especially as it relates to non-apparent reality. She wrote to Ingarden who was struggling with religious questions that “It seems that first, using the intellect, you have to approach the limits of reason and then come to the door of mystery.”²³

In a provocative paragraph that ends the first chapter of *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein sums up one of the challenges posed by the French Debate in this way:

Unbelievers have no good reason to distrust the findings of Christian philosophy on the grounds that it uses as a standard of measurement, not only the ultimate truths of reason, but also the truths of faith. No one prevents them from applying the criterion of reason in full stringency and from rejecting everything that does not measure up to it. They may also freely decide whether they want to go further and take account of those findings which have been gained with the aid of revelation. In this case they will accept the truths of faith not as “theses” (as do believers) but only as “hypotheses.” But as to whether or not the conclusions at which both arrive are in accord with the truths of reason, there prevails again a standard of measurement which both sides have in common... And unbelievers must judge for themselves whether by accepting this additional knowledge, they may perhaps gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of that which is. They will at any rate not shrink back from such an attempt if they are really as unbiased as, according to their own conviction, genuine philosophers ought to be.²⁴

Stein and her peers were determined to be unbiased and objective. Karl Schudt writes that the purpose of a Christian philosopher is not to deliver faith, but “to remove obstacles for the unbeliever.”²⁵

²² E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 28.

²³ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, November 8, 1927 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 259).

²⁴ E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁵ K. Schudt, *Edith Stein’s Proof for the Existence of God from Consciousness*, “American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly” 82 (Winter 2008), no. 1, p. 124.

Before examining the decisive role of phenomenology in influencing Stein's theological turn, let us review the no less decisive contribution of her life experiences.

Stein chronicles in her autobiography, periods of acute anxiety and even suicidal depression.²⁶ Before World War One, these arose from academic frustrations, a fear of failing in her academic projects and ambitions and family matters. It may be that her turn away as a young adolescent from the Judaism of her family contributed, but evidence for that hypothesis is lacking, especially since even after Stein's conversion, Queen Esther of the Jewish Bible, as well as her own mother, whom Stein deems upon her death an angel with intercessory powers, acted as paramount inspirations to godly devotion.²⁷ Edith Stein's iron will, remarkable intelligence, passion for learning, and feminist values certainly did not mesh well with the synagogue segregation of the sexes and women's exclusion from important religious rites and clerical positions.

World War One, however, brought a host of experiences that rocked the foundations of Stein's well being. During the war, Stein served for a time as a Red Cross nurse in a lazaretto on Germany's eastern front. There she treated men in acute suffering, many dying. Compounding these experiences, she lost her Göttingen University philosophical community of treasured friends. They scattered or still more shattering, many of her male friends and male relatives of her teachers and friends were injured and/or were killed. One particular death struck her particularly hard. When Stein learned of the death in 1917 of her deeply admired teacher and friend, Husserl's right hand man, Adolf Reinach, she was undone. She writes Ingarden, "...recently I have experienced difficult days – and there are more ahead – that have left me incapable of happiness."²⁸ Throughout Europe, countless individuals were searching for a shred of cosmic meaning in the relentless physical pain and the wholesale slaughter of millions. Soon, however, Stein encountered Reinach's wife Anne's calm, courage and positive approach to the death of her husband, which Anne had attributed to her Christian religious grounding. Anne's faith in the immortality of the soul,

²⁶ E. Stein, *Life...*, op. cit., p. 277.

²⁷ Edith Stein to Sr. Callista Kopf, October 4, 1936 [in:] E. Stein, *Self-Portrait in Letters, 1916–1942*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 5, transl. J. Koeppl OCD, Washington DC 1993, p. 238. See also: my discussion of Stein's elevation of her mother in Joyce Avrech Berkman, Esther and Mary: *The Uneasy Jewish/Catholic Dynamic in the Work and Life of Edith Stein*, "Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion" 32 (Spring 2016), no. 1, p. 60.

²⁸ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, December 24, 1917 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 81).

symbolized through Jesus on the cross, propelled Stein to consider Christian belief more seriously.²⁹

Stein occasionally cited the powerful influence of coming to know people who were inspiring models of another kind of living. In *On Empathy* she observes, “By empathy with differently composed personal structures, we become clear on what we are not, what we are more or less than others.”³⁰ Applying this sentiment to her wartime female friends, Stein reflects in her autobiography:

Frau [Erika] Gothe was a very devout Protestant; and the warmth radiating from her goodness reached us... [my] friendship with Pauline [Adolf Reinach's, sister] and Erika had more depth and beauty than my former student friendships. For the first time, I was not the one to lead or to be sought after; but rather I saw in the others something better and higher than myself.³¹

Erika Gothe also provided an example of Stein's analysis of empathizing with another's joy. Gothe had let Stein know that Husserl was seeking an assistant and suggested to Husserl the possibility of Stein holding such a position. When Gothe learned of the actual arrangement taking place, Stein writes, “Her deep-set, dark eyes were alight with intense joy. That night when we went to bed she said, ‘Good night. Lady Assistant!’”³² This attitude of the pivotal role of empathic encounters with others correlates to Stein's immense indebtedness to St. Theresa's influence through Stein's empathizing with Theresa when she read Theresa's autobiography. In a telling letter to Ingarden, she explains that her intellectual work was essential to her journey to religion, but that her life experiences, along with concrete images of Christianity in the words of witnesses, such as Augustine, Francis and Teresa, were “decisive for me.”³³

Soon after the war, Stein's relationship with Husserl as his assistant unbraided. I will not take the time now to describe what happened. She eventually resigned from her assistantship, though she and Husserl sustained a sturdy and mutually admiring friendship. At the same time this was happening, Stein, the second woman in Germany to receive a doctorate in philosophy, met

²⁹ T.R. Posselt OCD, *Edith Stein: The Life of a Philosopher and Carmelite*, S.M. Batzdorff, J. Koepfel, J. Sullivan (eds.), Washington DC 2005, pp. 59–60, and End Note pp. 12, 246.

³⁰ E. Stein, *On The Problem of Empathy*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 3, transl. W. Stein, Washington DC 1989, p. 89.

³¹ E. Stein, *Life...*, op. cit., p. 308.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 411.

³³ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, November 8, 1927 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 259).

rejection over and over again in her efforts to land a professorship, and, if you will, to land a life partner, and in her effort to get the Weimar government to remove discrimination against appointment of women in the civil service. Other scholars have written at length about these experiences. Less studied is her intense disillusionment with, first, Germany's defeat in World War One and then with the failure of her vision of liberal democracy to take root. She had limited psychological resources to cope with all of these setbacks, which is why many scholars have attributed her turn to religion as a desperate source of comfort, rather than also a logical extension of her intellectual activity as a phenomenologist.

Certainly religion did offer her the strength she urgently needed. The significance of her anxieties to her theological turn is evident in her letter to Roman Ingarden in October 1918 when she informs him of her turn to Christianity as having "freed me of all that [her anxieties and depression] suppressed me and at the same time has given me the strength to see life anew and, thankfully, to start living again. Thus, I can speak of 'rebirth' in the deepest sense of the term."³⁴

No less vital, as Stein extended rational reflection to all phenomena, she discovered reason's limits or insufficiency. Mystery and mysteries of being are fundamental to all philosophies of religion. In my country, native American communities tell myriad stories, just as the Jewish and Christian Bibles tell numerous stories. One of the glories of our human imagination is our ability to express existential mystery through stories, and all stories reflect the truth of our contingent being, the non-given, as well as the given. For many native American peoples, the divinity is all pervasive, their religions pantheistic. For example, before hunting and killing a deer, the meat vital to survival, the hunter must engage in self-sacrificial rituals.

Stein knew that what is given to our natural reason is not all there is. That reality exceeds what is given, that truth is more than what natural rational and scientific thought discloses. In addition to fostering awareness of the limits of rational knowledge, phenomenology presented other concepts compatible with the theological turn. For Husserl, all experience, all that we think, intend, feel, all of our inner and outer life constitute phenomena for study. But how does that breadth of objects of study include what is not apparent, what our rational faculties cannot analyze?³⁵

³⁴ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, October 10, 1918 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 140).

³⁵ Edith Stein to Fritz Kaufmann, September 16, 1919, "I do not believe I have cut the knot concerning the problem of the free will. I have only emphasized the negative... what seems to me to be certain – that the spontaneity of the will cannot be deduced from the individual

Husserl's writings on inner time-consciousness and the concept of horizon and of intersubjectivity invoke the non-apparent. For Husserl, the given and non-given arise simultaneously and appear via human inner time consciousness, which he viewed as the living stream of our subjectivity.³⁶

The phenomenological method undergirds Stein's approach to being, whether the being or object is given, co-given with the non-given or of the simply non-given. The phenomenological method, as you who are here know, involves a process of reduction, *epoché*, as Husserl sets it forth in his *Ideen* (1913). It features a peeling away of all graspable attributes of an object and a bracketing as well of all our prejudices and assumptions to describe the abstract essence of an inner or outer object. But this abstract essence defies rational description of its origin and its dynamic. By the way, Stein sees in St. John of the Cross, her final study, an ascent to God, as based on peeling away to the divine co-given, that requires faith and revelation as well as reason for understanding.³⁷

Husserl also introduced the key concept of intention. We select objects to consider every moment of our day. These acts of consciousness reveal our intentions, consciously or unconsciously. Stein, like Scheler and St. John of the Cross, and many others (see Mayayana Buddhism),³⁸ interpret that intention as driven by desire or love or by hate or any other series of emotions. Scheler certainly influenced Stein in her conviction that the intention of perceiving the unknowable is driven by love.³⁹

Husserl proposed three ways to deduce knowledge:

1. The light of understanding
2. The forms, shapes, categories through which understanding grasps being
3. The objects through which we experience ourselves and other objects, including other consciousnesses.⁴⁰

Through his method, he argues that we climb or dive (you can choose your metaphor) to the essences of inner and outer objects.

strengths and natural tendencies. Then, I have opened the door to the philosophy of religion in whose domain further investigations must take place" (E. Stein, *Self-Portrait in Letters...*, op. cit., p. 33).

³⁶ J. Bornemark, *Max Scheler and Edith Stein...*, op. cit., pp. 46, 58.

³⁷ Ibidem, pp. 62–63. Bornemark cites Herbert Hecker, *Phänomenologie des Christlichen bei Edith Stein*, Wuerzburg 1993, p. 379, and Rolf Kuehn, *Leben aus dem Sein*, [in:] *Denken im Dialog: Zur Philosophie Edith Steins*, W. Herbstrich (ed.), Tuebingen 1991, pp. 118–132. Bornemark quotes heavily from Edith Stein, *Kreuzeswissenschaft, Studie über Johannes a Cruce* (Edith Stein Werke Bd. 1) (Louvain, E. Nauwelaerts, 1954).

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 65.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ E. Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, op. cit., p. 55.

Husserl's essence of the being of our self is the *Pure I*, or *Transcendent Ego*, because it is an abstraction or category for all human beings or selves. That *Pure I* readily becomes identified as the soul by Stein and other phenomenologists. The soul is the fount of our specific ego and of our individual spirit and personality. Phenomenologists, however, argue over whether the transcendent self is manifested in transcendent forms or types that shape our particular individuality.

A dilemma for Husserl's students, including Stein, concerns the independence of the objects outside our consciousness.⁴¹ What, for example, is the relationship between our counting to 5 and the number 5 itself. What is the relationship between the act, the naming, and the number?

Stein also reasons through the image of cherry trees in our garden. She notes that we see that they are in bloom. As a realist she reasons that these objects pre-exist our consciousness and language, but our grasp and understanding of the blooming cherries depend upon structures of our consciousness, our language, linguistic categories and modes of thinking; otherwise the pure form 'cherry' cannot have content for us.⁴² Jonna Bornemark labels Stein's approach to religion as "mystical realism."⁴³ Kathleen Haney dubs it "transcendental realism."⁴⁴

Those phenomenologists called "transcendental idealists,"⁴⁵ representing the direction of Husserl's thought, subsequently bracketed the existence of objects outside our consciousness. Students were, therefore, to set aside the idea of the reality of objects pre-existing our conscious attention. Therein, the evidence and logic they held were insufficient to argue for their objective existence outside our consciousness and it is the structures of our consciousness that should absorb our attention. These abstract essences, the essence of the object 'cherry,' intuited through phenomenological reduction, transcend time and place and are universal.

Stein's position is not altogether consistent and clear. Recently, Antonio Calcagno, having translated Stein's *Introduction to Philosophy*, concludes that she tried to combine both the idealist and realist positions. This leads to the theory of the co-giveness of objects, an outlook highly compatible with the thinking of Aquinas and others.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 33.

⁴² E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 16.

⁴³ J. Bornemark and H. Ruin, *Introduction*, op. cit., p. 11.

⁴⁴ K. Haney, *Inviting Edith Stein into the French Debate*, [in:] *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being...*, op. cit., p. 441.

⁴⁵ T.F. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara...*, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴⁶ A. Calcagno, *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, Pittsburg 2007, Chapter 7: *Die Fuelle oder das Nichts? Martin Heidegger and Edith Stein on the Question of Being*.

Stein, however, was not uncritical of Thomas. The Christian philosophy that she developed differed from Thomas on the rational path to knowledge of God. Where Thomas starts with beings in general, Stein starts, somewhat like Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, with the I, the self, the ego, and the contingency of all things finite, and adds a special element, the question of the origins and nature of our sense of security in our own being.⁴⁷ After all the peeling away, we are left with the peeling actor, the psycho-physical self, our most intimate and immediate knowledge. But whereas Descartes' I is disembodied, Stein's is embodied and this embodiment in the intersubjective act of empathy constitutes the self and the other.

Stein goes beyond Husserl's *Pure I* and asks what is the being of which I am conscious; what is the self which is conscious of itself, and what is that which is both conscious of itself and its motion. She proceeds to explore human contingency. She observes that we live in time, in the moment, which is the meeting point of past and future. We are no longer and not yet. We can recover the past to some extent through memory, but the future is indeterminate. We are always making choices over certain possibilities, e.g. to learn to swim. Aware of our temporality and our finitude, we imagine and we desire, she claims, God is a being that is not temporal but eternal, not finite but infinite, not limited but all encompassing, a pure act, as in *Exodus*, where God is who is. We, on the other hand, are never in full possession of our being, we're always becoming. And Stein asks, what secures this ever mutating being who we are? This is a question that goes beyond First Cause argument to something more personal. As long as we are alive, our fluctuating self is sustained, she concludes, by an infinite being.⁴⁸

Stein presents contradictory perspectives in her writings. She argues that God self-discloses in all created objects (co-giveness) and human reason can reveal that, but at other times she insists that the created can be known fully only through faith and revelation. For Stein, however, the non-given is not transparent and cannot be logically described. Faith became the key. Reason alone needs faith to fathom the objects of mystery. She proclaims that "Reason would turn into unreason if it would stubbornly content itself with what it is able to discover with its own light, barring out everything which is made visible to it by a brighter and more sublime light."⁴⁹ Stein takes a leap into faith that

⁴⁷ E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 58. See also: K. Schudt, *Edith Stein's Proof...*, op. cit., pp. 122–123.

⁴⁸ E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

Husserl does not. Although Husserl left open the possibility of seeing visions as a source of religious experience, he regarded faith as not relevant to philosophy. Regarding this leap of faith, Stein cites the words in Aesop's Fables, #209: "hic Rhodus, hic salta" ("here is Rhodes, jump here").⁵⁰

Stein's personal theological turn involves three turns: 1. Turn to religion, 2. Turn to Christianity, 3. Turn to Catholic theology.

The geographical and socio-historical context of Stein's intellectual and spiritual development is essential to understanding the character of her theological turn to Christianity, rather than Buddhism or revisionist forms of Judaism. In the Germany of the time when Stein entered the university, phenomenology had won the hearts and minds of many philosophically minded students. Stein made the difficult choice in of leaving her family and friends in Breslau to follow Husserl, the Master, as he was dubbed, of phenomenology to the University of Göttingen. Eventually she followed him to Freiburg to complete and defend her doctoral thesis and receive her doctoral degree on August 3, 1916.

Turn to Religion

We must ask with regard to Stein, as she moved into the realm of non-given, what method for understanding was part of the tool kit of her time? The most influential options were impersonal deism or theism in its various types, varieties of Judaism and varieties of Christianity. We do not know whether Stein ever studied Eastern religions, though various German philosophers and writers did. Stein never encountered Jewish theology or philosophy, apart from Spinoza. For example, I see no reference in her writing to Neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen or phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas or intersubjective analysts such as Martin Buber. Stein, however, did admire Spinoza highly, and in 1926 requested from the General Vicariat of Speyer permission, which was granted, to keep in her possession Spinoza's complete works along with three books by Bergson, and one apiece from Hume, Kant and Locke, to assist in her study of the relationship between modern philosophers and Aquinas.⁵¹ She, however, never cites Spinoza's

⁵⁰ Edith Stein to Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmid, February 16, 1930 (E. Stein, *Self-Portrait in Letters...*, op. cit., p. 60). See also: her analogy of the "leap into the abyss... The believer leaps across lightly, the unbeliever stops this side of the precipice," [in:] *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 110, and to the wager (reminiscent of Pascal's wager) in her letter to Roman Ingarden, November 20, 1927 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 263).

⁵¹ Edith Stein to the General Vicariate, Speyer on the Rhine, February 21, 1926 (*Self-Portrait in Letters...*, op. cit., pp. 49–50).

understanding of his core concept of infinitude in her religious development. Nowhere does she write of outstanding rabbis in the synagogues she attended with her mother before and after her conversion. Among her phenomenological circle of associates and friends were a remarkable number of Jews, and, as much as I can glean, other Jews among her Jewish teachers and friends, with few exceptions, either suspended their beliefs or converted to some denomination of Christianity. Henri Bergson's writings certainly influenced Stein's philosophical thinking - but not her religious orientation.

When Stein abandoned Judaism in her early teens, she became an unbeliever in a broad sense – i.e. she did not become an atheist, but rather an agnostic and indifferent to questions of religion. For her, phenomenology served as her religion. But let me be clear; Stein never abandoned her ethnic pride. She delighted in the fact that she was connected with Jesus physically, as she told her Jesuit confessor, Father Hirschmann, “You don't know what it means to me to be a daughter of the chosen people – to belong to Christ, not only spiritually, but according to the flesh.”⁵² And, further, she never tried to convert any believing Jew to Christianity. Her foremost concern became unbelieving Jews and Christians.⁵³

In tracking Stein's turn toward religious experience, we find that as early as 1913 and '14, Stein no longer ruled out religious experiences as phenomena to investigate. The phenomenologist philosopher Max Scheler, about whom I will speak again in connection with Stein's learning about Catholicism, was responsible. Stein writes that he was a genius, and his study *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values...* probably affected the entire intellectual world of recent decades even more than Husserl's *Ideas*. The young phenomenologists were greatly influenced by Scheler; some ...depended more on him than on Husserl. Stein found stirring, Scheler's insistence on “radical intellectual honesty.”⁵⁴ When Stein met him, he was working out his theory of sympathy, a focus on emotional objects corresponding to Stein's focus on empathy as an object. During her first two years at Göttingen, Scheler rivaled Husserl in attracting philosophy students. In Scheler's remarks on religion, Stein writes, Scheler opened for her:

⁵² Posselt quotes Stein's words to Daniel Feuling [in:] *Edith Stein: The Life...*, op. cit., p. 109. His recollection of this incident appears in his *Short Biographical Sketch of Edith Stein*, [in:] *Never Forget: Christian and Jewish Perspectives on Edith Stein*, W. Herbstrith (ed.), transl. S. Bartzdorff, Washington DC, 1998, pp. 260–263.

⁵³ G. Stein, *My Experience with my Aunt Edith Stein*, [in:] *Never Forget...*, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵⁴ E. Stein, *Life...*, op. cit., pp. 258–259.

a region of phenomena which I could then no longer bypass blindly. With good reason, we were repeatedly enjoined to observe all things without prejudice, to discard all possible "blindness." The barriers of rationalistic prejudices... fell, and the world of faith unfolded before me.⁵⁵

When Stein was working on her dissertation in 1915 and 1916, she had not yet examined the field of faith, but religion surfaces a few times in her dissertation. The final section of her dissertation is titled *Empathy as the understanding of Spiritual Persons*. This is a curious section. Stein's use of spirit (*Geist*) should not be confused with a spiritual or religious person, but, rather, is a term for the aspect of the individual's consciousness that is separate from natural and physical forms. In the early 1920s, Stein further fleshes out the dynamic interplay between our physical and psychological attributes and experiences and our distinct mental and spiritual aspects. Stein rejected psychological determinism and insisted on the human capacity for free will. She viewed that freedom emanated from one's spirit. She understands that spirit is a facet of the *Pure I* that Husserl expounds. Still, it is in this section of her dissertation when she considers the possibility of an individual empathizing with a personality type very different from their own that she invokes the religious person. She writes:

I can be skeptical myself and still understand that another sacrifices all his earthly goods to his faith. I see him behave in this way and empathize a value experiencing as the motive for his conduct... I empathically gain the type of *homo religiosus* by nature foreign to me, and I understand it even though what newly confronts me here will always remain unfulfilled.⁵⁶

She goes on to insist on our making an effort of transcending our self-structure, lest "we take the self as the standard [and] lock ourselves into the prison of our individuality. Others become riddles for us, or still worse, we remodel them into our image and so falsify historical truth." This quotation shows the vital openness of Stein's phenomenology and personality. It relates to her value for objectivity, but reveals more – her recognition that personal growth demands openness to others unlike ourselves, no matter how different from ourselves, a philosophy that I wish prevailed in our world today.

In this same section of *On Empathy*, Stein speculates on religious personalities:

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 260.

⁵⁶ E. Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, op. cit., p. 115.

There have been people who thought that in a sudden change of their person they experienced the effect of the grace of God, others who felt themselves to be guided in their conduct by a protective spirit...Who can say whether there is genuine experience present here or whether there is that unclearness about our motives which we found in considering the 'idols of self knowledge'?

Then Stein asks:

is the essential possibility of genuine experience in this area already given with the delusions of such experience?... the study of religious consciousness seems to me to be the most appropriate means of answering our question... However, I leave the answering of this question to further investigation and satisfy myself here with a 'non liquet,' It is not clear.⁵⁷

A year later, by 1917, if not before, Stein found herself searching for clarity phenomenologically. She immersed herself in questions of religion. She has begun writing about metaphysics. She remarks to Roman Ingarden:

I find that many people will cut all corners (to totally avoid the religious experience) though it is impossible to conclude a teaching on person without going into the God question, and it is impossible to understand history. Of course, I am still not at all clear about this... It is THE question that interests me. When you return, perhaps we can read Augustine together.⁵⁸

At the same time, though devastated by Adolf Reinach's death, she and his widow Anne prepared his literary remains for publication. Among these was a paper on the philosophy of religion written while in the battlefield. Reinach stressed the idea of security that God gave finite individuals. This security, for her, appears in her image of being cradled in God's arms as a child in her parents' arms,⁵⁹ an image that kindles her thinking phenomenologically about the possibility of a divine being in new ways, as I will explain shortly.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 118.

⁵⁸ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, February 20, 1917 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., pp. 49–50).

⁵⁹ E. Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, op. cit., p. 58.

Turn to Christianity

By 1918, four years before her conversion, Stein, evident in her correspondence with Roman Ingarden, is already discussing the philosophy of religion with Husserl and Heidegger and anticipating her “the great decision” ahead.⁶⁰ She has delved into a number of major Protestant and Catholic religious writings: *The Gospel of Luke*, Schleiermacher’s *Sermons*, writings by Heinrich Scholz (Protestant Theologian and University of Breslau Professor of Religion), Selma Lagerlöf’s *Christuslegenden*, a collection of German religious poems in the *Bücher der Rose*, Josef Kreitmaier’s essay on Expressionism and Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*. She informs Ingarden that she was impressed by Möhler’s *Symbolik* and later Scheebben’s *Mysterien des Christentums*: “a book I very much love and value. It is the first work, or one of the first, that after the great flood of rationalism, placed itself again quite decisively in support of the supernatural and became fundamental for the entirely new dogmatics.”⁶¹ Stein is also engaged in conversations with Gerda Walther about mysticism and parapsychology, the latter a field of interest to Henri Bergson and William James and other philosophers.⁶² By October 10th, 1918, Stein writes to Ingarden: “I have overcome all the obstacles and increasingly have a thoroughly positive view of Christianity.”⁶³

During her summer with her closest friend, philosopher Hedwig Conrad Martius, and before Stein read *The Life of Saint Teresa by Herself*, she was actively discussing religious questions. She describes Hedwig’s work *Metaphysical Conversations*, which investigates the soul and ontology in general, as “indescribably wonderful.” In the same letter to Roman Ingarden, not mentioned in Stein scholarship, Stein began a treatise on the philosophy of religion at the same time! She also predicts that “Presumably, in the future, I will work only in this area.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, October 12, 1918 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 41).

⁶¹ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, September 24, 1918 (*ibidem*, p. 131) and October 12, 1918 (*ibidem*, p. 141), and November 8, 1927 (*ibidem*, p. 259).

⁶² Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, August 7, 1917 (*ibidem*, p. 77).

⁶³ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, October 10, 1918 (*ibidem*, p. 139).

⁶⁴ Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, August 30, 1921 (*ibidem*, p. 188).

Turn to Catholicism

Why did she become Catholic rather than Protestant? Stein wrote that she searched a long time before she found the religious answers she needed. These, she found in St. Teresa's autobiography, which she spent a night reading during her 1921 summer stay with the Theodor Conrad and Hedwig Conrad-Martius, both Jewish converts to Protestantism. Stein's reverence for Theresa is all the more interesting because Hedwig was at that time her closest and dearest friend. Still, it was this book that set the seal on her choice of which form of Christianity.⁶⁵

Despite Stein's words, Przywara (1889–1972), the distinguished Jesuit theologian and insightful mentor of Stein, and who was, as well, a prolific writer and fervent anti-Nazi, challenges Stein's claim to Hedwig of Teresa's autobiography's catalytic role. Przywara reported a different turning point: We were walking along the bank of the Rhein in Speyer when she told me that while still an atheist she found in the bookstore she frequented, a copy of [Ignatius Loyola's] *Spiritual Exercises*. It interested her first only as a study of psychology, but she quickly realized that it was not something to read but to do. So as an atheist, she made, along with the little book, the long retreat and finished the thirty days with the decision to convert.⁶⁶ What troubles me about Przywara's alternate account is that Stein was not an atheist at any point in her life. She was an agnostic or skeptic. Also, as I've suggested already, Stein had already moved toward Christianity, even if she had not identified which form of Christianity.

Assuming that Stein's own words matter and Teresa's autobiography acted as a catalyst to her decision to convert to Catholicism, then how did it? Should her experience with this book fall under the category of life experiences or a consequence of her phenomenology? Both, I argue, come to play.

I can readily appreciate Stein's attraction to Teresa's autobiography. Teresa also experienced deep depression and psychological exhaustion and wrestled with suffering and death. She too was a woman of power and leadership.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, fn. 4, p. 189, includes a substantial discussion of Stein's reading of Teresa of Avila's autobiography and its relation to Stein's conversion. It makes special reference to Stein's explanation to Johannes Hirschmann of the autobiography's pivotal impact. According to Posselt, *Edith Stein: The Life...*, op. cit., Stein told her and Hedwig Conrad-Martius of the autobiography's influence. Nowhere, however, did Stein leave a written account of her experience. See: Posselt's *Edith Stein: The Life...*, editors' extensive discussion in footnote 3 of Ch. 7, 246 and in their "gleanings 4," pp. 292–293. See also: Edith Stein to Roman Ingarden, January 1, 1928 (*Letters to Roman Ingarden*, op. cit., p. 266).

⁶⁶ T.F. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara...*, op. cit., p. 121. Przywara cites his "Die Frage Edith Stein," *In und Gegen*, Nuremberg 1955, p. 72.

Teresa's entrepreneurial and risk taking radical reform and transformation of the Carmelite order in the face of considerable resistance and the terror of the Inquisition no doubt thrilled Stein. Further, Teresa was dedicated to a contemplative life; she combined intellectual passions with a deep emotional and mystical relationship with God. A reading of Teresa's account reveals a vigorously thinking woman, for example in her careful, complex delineation of the nature of prayer.

We can consider other factors in Stein's turn to Catholicism, such as her pleasure in Catholic churches being open to worshippers beyond set services, her visits to Catholic monasteries with the Protestant Conrads and her relish in reading Latin texts. Stein's mastery of Latin surely shaped Professor Gertrud Koebner's conclusion after a conversation with Stein, "It was because the Lutheran Church had none of this that she could never be a Lutheran."⁶⁷ Possibly, Stein's anti-nationalism and universalistic outlook along with her identification with the minority and persecuted state of Catholicism historically in Prussia were further elements.⁶⁸

Phenomenology again appears as an influence when we examine Stein's regard for Max Scheler, whom I earlier discussed. Stein underscores his Catholicism:

I do not know in which year Scheler returned to the Catholic Church... he was full of Catholic ideas at the time and employed all the brilliance of his spirit and his eloquence to plead them. This was my first encounter with this hitherto totally unknown world.⁶⁹

I suspect Stein's emphasis upon the body as central to the empathic act, as well as the constitution of the person inclined her toward Catholicism more than Lutheranism. While all Christian denominations pose a tension, if not a dualism, between the mind and body, or soul and body, the antinomy is more muted in Catholicism. Stein may have found in many Catholic texts a fuller acceptance of the body as God's creation than in most Protestant texts. For example, the very idea that one has intimacy with God's body in the experience of transubstantiation of wine and bread is utterly alien to the dominant Protestant view of the sacrament as essentially a spiritual or cerebral intimacy or simply a symbolic event. Similarly, Catholic iconography of Jesus as baby and

⁶⁷ Waltraud Herbstrith quotes the recollection of Professor Gertrude Koebner, *Edith Stein: A Biography*, transl. B. Bonowitz, OCSO, San Francisco 1992, p. 71.

⁶⁸ E. Stein, *Life...*, pp. 168–169, 190.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 260.

as adult on the cross highlights his humanness and physical reality. Indeed, this is closer to Stein's Jewish upbringing in which God becomes immanent and physical in the burning bush.

I offer two conclusions: (1), the combined influence and affirmation of Stein's life experiences, her devotion to Thomas and other theologians, along with her devotion to Husserl and the philosophy of phenomenology typifies all aspects of Stein's thought. Throughout all of Stein's published writings, whether on empathy, on being and personhood, on the state, on community, on women, on education, and in her correspondence, we can see her drive to integrate, reconcile, combine, a kind of irenic, peace-loving impulse. Thomas offered a model, but her striving carried into all matters. Przywara underscored how the Carmelites served as a hybrid site for reconciling her past, present and desired future.⁷⁰ Carmel spirituality rested on the life and words of the prophet Elijah. Carmel and Israel came together in the order. Stein had not abandoned her Jewish ethnic identity nor major elements of Jewish belief and worship, as these are evident in Carmel's six pointed star of David in their sacred art and their worship beginning with the Jewish declaration of monotheistic faith, *Schma Israel*.⁷¹ Carmel also prized prayer and intellectual endeavor, and Stein found a haven for her research and writing. She could remain faithful to Husserl and Aquinas, other medieval thinkers, as well as classical Greek and Latin thinkers. An essay of mine, published in the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* treats Stein's ability to join together her worship of both Queen Esther and Jesus' mother, Mary. Relatedly, she integrates both secular feminist views on women based upon a phenomenological analysis with Christian texts, to pioneer a Christian Feminism - which some would claim is debatable just as is the concept of Christian philosophy.⁷²

My second conclusion is (2) Stein scholars are very familiar and often daunted by her response to queries about her conversion when she uttered *secretum meum mihi*. These were the words which Protestant Hedwig Conrad-Martius reported were Stein's response when Hedwig asked her about her attraction to Christianity and to Catholicism. She simply did not want to share with others her reasons for her theological turn. Harm Kleuting, Professor of Church history and theology and a priest in the Archdiocese of Cologne claims, however, that *secretum*, which scholars hold is taken from the Jewish Bible, does

⁷⁰ T.F. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara...*, op. cit., p. 126.

⁷¹ E. Stein, *The Prayer of the Church*, [in:] *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 4, L. Gelber and M. Linssen (eds.), transl. W. Stein, Washington DC 1992, p. 7.

⁷² J. Berkman, *Esther and Mary...*, op. cit., pp. 55-74.

not mean secret in all versions of the Jewish Bible. And contrary to the views of other scholars, he argues that Stein was not quoting the Bible, but St. John of the Cross, who voiced these words when he was imprisoned in 1578 Toledo. Therein, John was citing both the Jewish Bible and Corinthians 12:4. Kleuting speculates that Stein may have come across St. John's words in 1918, when Husserl gave a lecture on Otto's earlier mentioned book *The Idea of the Holy*, in which St. John is quoted.⁷³

In sum, Stein did not keep her religious evolution a secret. She has directly and indirectly left many clues to her spiritual development. An understanding of her three intellectual and spiritual turns reveal the nature of the evolution of Stein's philosophy and theology. They also invite us to reflect on the relationships between our experience and our intellectual and spiritual development within our historical context.

Bibliography

- Berkman J., *Esther and Mary: The Uneasy Jewish/Catholic Dynamic in the Work and Life of Edith Stein*, "Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion" 32, (Spring 2016), no. 1.
- Berkman J., *Introduction*, [in:] *Contemplating Edith Stein*, J.A. Berkman (ed.), Notre Dame 2006.
- Bornemark J., *Max Scheler and Edith Stein as Precursors of the Turn to Religion within Phenomenology*, [in:] *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*, J. Bornemark, H. Ruin (eds.), Söderstörn 2010.
- Bornemark J., Ruin H., *Introduction*, [in:] *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*, J. Bornemark, H. Ruin (eds.), Söderstörn, 2010.
- Bréhier E., *Y-a-t'il une philosophie chrétienne?*, "Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale" 38 (1931), no. 4.
- Calcagno A., *Assistant and/or Collaborator? Edith Stein's Relationship to Edmund Husserl's Ideen II*, [in:] *Contemplating Edith Stein*, J.A. Berkman (ed.), Notre Dame 2006.
- Calcagno A., *Edith Stein's Philosophy of Community in her Early Work and her later Finite and Eternal Being: Martin Heidegger's Impact*, "Philosophy and Theology" 23, no. 2.
- Calcagno A., *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, Pittsburg 2007.
- Haney K., *Inviting Edith Stein into the French Debate*, [in:] *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, M. Lebeck, J.H. Gurmin (eds.), Oxford 2015.
- Kleuting H., *Edith Stein and John of the Cross: An Intellectual and Spiritual Relation from Husserl's Lecture in 1918 to the Gas Chamber of Auschwitz in 1941*, [in:] *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, M. Lebeck, J.H. Gurmin (eds.), Oxford 2015.

⁷³ H. Kleuting, *Edith Stein and John of the Cross...*, op. cit., pp. 470–471.

- O'Meara T.F. OP, *Erich Przywara, SJ: His Theology and His World*, Notre Dame 2002.
- Posselt T.R. OCD, *Edith Stein: The Life of a Philosopher and Carmelite*, S. Batzdorff, J. Koepel, J. Sullivan (eds.), Washington DC 2015.
- Sadler G., *Reason Fulfilled by Revelation: the 1930s Christian Philosophy Debates in France*, Washington DC 2012.
- Schudt K., *Edith Stein's Proof for the Existence of God from Consciousness*, "American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly" 82 (Winter 2008), no. 1.
- Société thomiste, *Proceedings of the Juvisy Conference: Journées d'Etudes de la Société Thomiste 1, Juvisy, 12 September 1932, Juvisy 1932*.
- Stein E., *Finite and Eternal Being*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 9, transl. K. Reinhardt, Washington DC 2002.
- Stein E., *Knowledge and Faith*, transl. W. Redmond, Washington DC 2000.
- Stein E., *Letters to Roman Ingarden*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 12, transl. H.C. Hunt, Washington DC 2014.
- Stein E., *Life in a Jewish Family, 1891–1916: An Autobiography*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 1, L. Gelber, R. Leuven OCD (eds.), transl. J. Koepel OCD, Washington DC 1986.
- Stein E., *On the Problem of Empathy*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 3, transl. W. Stein, Washington DC 1989.
- Stein E., *Self-Portrait in Letters, 1916–1941*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 5, transl. J. Koepel OCD, Washington DC 1993.
- Stein E., *The Hidden Life: Hagiographic Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts*, [in:] *Collected Works of Edith Stein*, vol. 4, L. Gelber and M. Linszen (eds.), transl. W. Steon, Washington DC 1992.
- Stein G., *My experience with my Aunt Edith Stein*, [in:] *Never Forget: Christian and Jewish Perspectives on Edith Stein*, W. Herbstrith (eds.), transl. S. Batzdorff, Washington DC 1998.

JOYCE AVRECH BERKMAN (PROF.) – a PhD from Yale University, is Professor of History Emerita at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, where, from 1965–2014, she taught courses in modern Europe, with a focus on the history of ideas, European and American women's history, theory and methods concerning first person documents – autobiography, correspondence, diaries, oral histories – and the use of fiction in the study of history. The question of empathy in relation to presenting the subjectivity of people in history has long concerned her. A recipient of various awards, e.g. the University's Distinguished Teacher award and the University's Award for Distinguished Outreach in Scholarship, she has twice held a Fulbright Senior Scholar Grant in Research and Teaching at the Free University in Berlin. Her publications, among their diverse subjects, treat the life and writings of Olive Schreiner, Vera Brittain, and Edith Stein. She is currently President of her University's Retired Faculty Association.