

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

**EDITH STEIN'S CRITIQUE
OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER:
BACKGROUND, REASONS AND SCOPE**

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**A thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

**FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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This thesis is a critical assessment of Edith Stein's critique of Martin Heidegger, which is focused on the definition of the human being. I explore Stein's ontology of the person from the point of view of her examination of Heidegger's existential '*Dasein*' and the way she reaches a very different answer to the same question that Heidegger posed, the question of the meaning of being. To this end I examine key passages of Stein's most important ontological work *Finite and Eternal Being - An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* along with its appendix *Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Existence*, in which she directly discussed Heidegger's philosophy, focusing on his work *Being and Time*.

In the first part of this research I draw a historico-philosophical overview of the academic and political background of the period between World War I and World War II in Germany in order to position both authors in context and investigate their philosophical influences as well as their ambiguous relationship with the phenomenological school. The central part is dedicated to Stein's analysis of Heidegger's *Dasein*: I compare and explain both authors' approaches to the philosophical understanding of human being, person, life, soul and death. This investigation was carried out with both a hermeneutical and terminological analysis. I draw upon the results to demonstrate how Stein's phenomenology of life experiences enlarges the borders of human finitude to embrace the possibility of its ontological horizon while Heidegger restricts and concentrates the entire ontological question on the *Dasein*, its existence and ultimately its finitude.

My findings provide an assessment of the limits as well as the strengths of Stein's critique. I demonstrate that Stein attempted to build a bridge between classical ontology and phenomenology, while Heidegger's distance from the philosophical tradition was rooted in his methodological refusal. I also show how their opposite methods and findings present unexpected similarities and how Stein's philosophical significance should be reconsidered in the light of her work.

This research leads to various implications for today's philosophical debate and makes it possible to view Stein's theory of being in a wider ethical context, as presented in the final part of this work. I argue that Heidegger depersonalises and violates traditional ontology to explain the human being only in terms of pure existence, while Stein's portrait of the 'fullness' and the meaning of life contributes to the discussion between philosophy and religion. In the final section of this work I show how some of the elements emerging from Stein's critique of Heidegger can cast a light on the current ethical discussion about how death is understood and experienced socially, and how best to care for the dying.

Bibliographical note and abbreviations

I have been fortunate in that a translation of Stein's essay on Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Existence was completed recently by Mette Lebech. This text along with the English translation of *Finite and Eternal Being* (CWES 9) provides the main text for my research. As for *Being and Time* I have used the English translation by Macquarrie and Robinson (first edition 1962).

For the main texts I have generally quoted from the English translation, however a large part of my observations rely on the original text; where necessary I have indicated in brackets the original German or Latin expression. I have avoided capitalization of the words 'being' as well as other capitalization in the English translation of the German words (as reported for instance by Macquarrie and Robinson) and in this sense I have amended English translations where so indicated. I also chose to use the original expression *Dasein* for Heidegger's term instead of any proposed translation. All texts that were not already translated into English I have translated myself. For practicality I have used abbreviations of the original German titles of the three main text involved in this research, although the page number indicated for quotes refers to the English edition, as follows:

- EES: Edith Stein, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein: Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins*, Gesamtausgabe 11-12 Freiburg: Herder, 2006, trans. K. F. Reinhardt, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2002.
- MHE: Edith Stein "Anhang: Martin Heideggers Existentialphilosophie" in ibidem, trans. Mette Lebech, "Martin Heidegger's Existential Philosophy", Maynooth Philosophical Papers 4, 2007.
- SZ: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag 2001, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012, first ed. 1962.

Other recurrent abbreviations are:

- CWES: The Collected Works of Edith Stein.
- ESGA (*Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe*): The Complete German Edition of Edith Stein's Works.
- ESW (*Edith Steins Werke*): The older German Edition of Edith Stein's Works (ed. from 1950).

- *JPPF (Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung)*: Yearbook for Philosophical and Phenomenological Research.
- *AMP (Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person)*: STEIN, E. *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person : Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, ESGA 14.
- *Ideas (Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy)*: HUSSERL, E. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. First (published 1913), second and third book (published 1952).

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“Dass Heidegger etwas Großes ist und dass er uns alle in die Tasche stecken kann, glaube ich auf Grund seines Buchen auch. Vorher wusste ich es nicht bzw. ich sah nur die Wirkungen, d.h. seinen großen Einfluss auf die junge Generation“.

“The fact that Heidegger is something big and can put all of us in his pockets is something that I believe also because of his book. I didn’t know it before, I only saw the effects, the great influence that he has on the young generation”.
(Edith Stein, letter to Roman Ingarden on 2 February 1927.)

Chapter 1. Introduction

In this section I explain the methodology and the structure of this thesis. I offer an overview of the life and work of Edith Stein, her decision to write an essay on Martin Heidegger’s philosophy of existence, and review the existing literature on this topic. I also briefly address the controversial topic of Heidegger’s silence and the fact that he never directly addressed his critics.

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1.1. Aim, methodology and structure

This research aims to offer a critical evaluation of Martin Heidegger’s and Edith Stein’s philosophical analysis of the human being, as they both address the following questions: What is the human being? Are the end of temporal life and the ontological horizon part of what constitutes the human

being and, if so, how is our understanding of it affected by the experience of death?

I defend the thesis that Stein's short essay has the great merit of 'opening up' Heidegger's difficult thought (in the words of Paolinelli, 2011, p. 10) and making it accessible in a clear and genuine way by forcing Heidegger to answer to everyday questions and translating his vocabulary into concepts such as life, death, fear and humanity, something only a few of Heidegger's commentators have managed. I also demonstrate how these two very opposite thinkers share more than a surprising closeness of questioning and intent in their works, why this closeness gives Stein more than one reason to criticise Heidegger's existential philosophy and what the scope, the merit and the validity of this critique is.

This is not a full-scale comparison of Stein and Heidegger. From the point of view of a historical and hermeneutical examination, I take into consideration the academic development of both authors in the years broadly enclosed by WWI and WWII, from the time when they both started their academic careers at the University of Freiburg to the completion of Edith Stein's main ontological work *Finite and Eternal Being*, in which she discusses Heidegger's positions and to which she decides to add a short essay which is a direct critique of *Being and Time*¹. In particular I highlight the distinctiveness of their opposing routes: from the many similarities in their academic beginnings, to the turn into very different trajectories in philosophy and in life.

¹ Edith Stein takes on the position of private assistant of Husserl in 1916. After two years

As for the analysis of the human person, I proceed by making, in a way, a 'critique of a critique': I expose and assess the structure of Stein's reasoning, while she is - in turn - analysing Heidegger's thought. I am not aiming to determine who is right or wrong. On the contrary, while I find most of Stein's argumentation logical and truthful, in following her discussion with and about Heidegger I come to the conclusion that the understanding of what life and death are, forms the essential core of both Stein and Heidegger's philosophical systems. Furthermore, I demonstrate how Heidegger provides a constructive counterpoint to Stein's theory, which allows her to articulate her own views even more clearly and coherently.

Finally, as I aim to assess Stein's critique concerning the specific subject of the understanding of the human being, I bring her critical discussion out of the parameters of her evaluation of Heidegger, and use it to contribute to the current ethical debate concerning the meaning of life and death, more precisely I look at the way that death is perceived and experienced today.

This project will be structured as follows:

- a) In the first part (Chapter 2: Opposite routes and a common question) I conduct a historic-philosophical overview of the period between World War I and World War II in Germany, in order to position both authors in context. In particular, I aim to explain Stein's and Heidegger's close relationship with Husserl and their connection to the phenomenological method, since it is this strong 'imprinting' which initiates their investigation of the problem of being. While I do not seek

to offer an exhaustive explanation of the phenomenological method, I support the theory that this method provided both authors with a research approach essentially free from prejudice, which was helpful in confronting their religious beliefs. Also it was Stein's interest in a phenomenology of life experience that helped her to enlarge the borders of the investigation, and include a lively discussion with Aquinas' philosophical perspectives, as well as other philosophical sources. In this chapter I also address the matter of the best way to compare the authors in question and explain Heidegger's silence regarding the critiques of his philosophy. I also briefly look at Heidegger's early years, and consider how he starts to come to terms with his own religious beliefs and his understanding of a philosophical method. This part concludes with an overview of the history of the question of being, its role and importance for contemporary philosophy.

- b) The central part of this work consists of a close analysis of Stein's critique of Heidegger's *Dasein* (Chapter 3: Understanding *Being and Time*). I draw on Stein's assessment and highlight the key aspects of her critique while explaining the difference in her ontological system from that of Heidegger. The key elements that I analyse are Heidegger's reasons to refuse to use a traditional personal terminology and the consequences that follow from the coincidence of being and existence for the definition of the human being. To this aim I look closer at Aquinas' classical metaphysics and Heidegger's

understanding of Christian ontology as expressed in *Being and Time*. I also draw a parallel between Heidegger's definition of *Geworfenheit* (being thrown) and Stein's concept of *Geborgenheit* (being held securely), which is representative of their different approach to the existential condition of the human being: alone and estranged for Heidegger; secure, supported and hopeful for Stein.

- c) In the final chapter (Chapter 4: For an ontology of the person) I draw upon my analysis of Stein's positions: Stein offers a comprehensive view of the human being and the idea of life, caducity, authenticity, and future, as they emerge from the confrontation with Heidegger. While in Chapters 2 and 3 I mostly aim to present Stein's critique and investigate its reasons, structure and connections to other thinkers, in this final part I critically assess the intent behind such a critique and aim to understand its consequences, particularly what she sees as missing in Heidegger's theory and what she proposes instead. In the last part of this chapter I attempt to put Stein's 'personal ontology' to good use by addressing one of today's most pressing ethical controversies: the debate on end-of-life care and the way death is regarded and dealt with. It is my opinion that a philosophical contribution to the meaning of being a human person, the end of life, acceptance and death, has much to offer to the practical implications of end-of-life care.

1.2. About Edith Stein

At this stage it is necessary to offer a brief overview of Edith Stein's life and work². Her research enjoyed a relative notoriety during her lifetime, thanks to the publications of her phenomenological essays, and her career as a public speaker, however her most important works could not be published until after her death and the end of the Second World War. Although the first edition of Stein's collected works contributed greatly to earning her a place in philosophical history, and demonstrated the depth and range of her investigations, some of her writings were misplaced and inaccurately dated, which involuntarily contributed to fundamental aspects of her philosophical progression being overlooked³. This progression can be broadly characterised as a move from phenomenology to Christian ontology and into mysticism.

After she was beatified and declared a martyr of the Catholic Church in 1987, when she was canonised in 1998 by Pope John Paul II with her Carmelite name of Saint Teresia Benedicta of the Cross and proclaimed patroness of Europe in 1999, there was an increased interest from many areas of academia in Stein's work. The results of this renewed interest revealed more clearly the roots of Stein's philosophy in the 19th century tradition of phenomenology and personalism.

² I am not quoting from a particular biography, but out of the many being written I benefitted the most from Gerl, *Unerbittliches Licht*, 1991; the very first one written by Teresia Renata Posselt, *Edith Stein: the Life of a Philosopher and Carmelite* (revised edition 2005) and Stein's autobiography *Aus dem Leben einer jüdischen Familie* and biographical letters and writings (ESGA I, II, III, IV).

³ See 1.5. Literature review, p. 15.

Edith Stein studied psychology, German and history at the University of Breslau, her hometown, but later decided to move to Göttingen to learn phenomenology from Edmund Husserl, fascinated by the new method and its research possibilities. It was the start of a long intellectual commitment: Stein obtained her doctorate with a thesis on the phenomenology of empathy and then took up the great task of working as Husserl's private assistant in Freiburg, a position that she maintained for two and a half years, hoping for the chance of collaborating with him. In 1918 she resigned and Husserl offered the position to Martin Heidegger. In the following years Stein published three more phenomenological studies⁴ and collaborated with fellow phenomenologists on new editions, however the tragic experience of the war, along with personal and professional disappointments, brought her to an extensive reconsideration of her life and her beliefs.

In January 1922 Stein officially became a Catholic, although the process of her religious conversion had already started years before. From this point on she produced significant works particularly on the education of Catholic women, and participated in international educational seminars and radio programmes. While working as a school teacher, she completed the German translations of John Henry Newman's *Apologia* and *The Idea of a University*, of Aquina's *De ente et essentia* and *Quaestiones disputatae de Veritate* and (together with Hedwig Conrad-Martius) of Alexandre Koyre's *L'idée de Dieu et les preuves de son existence chez Descartes*, which has now

⁴ The essays "Sentient Causality" (1918) and "Individual and Community" (1919), in ESGA 8, and the essay "On the State" (1921), ESGA 7. See also p. 25.

been included in the new collected edition⁵. These translations were carried out between 1920 and 1930, and provide insights into Stein's readings at the time and the breadth of her academic interests.

After working on Aquinas, Stein embarked on an original comparison of Scholastic philosophy and phenomenology and published first an article in Husserl's journal⁶ and later a detailed tractate, which she titled *Potency and Act*,⁷ that underwent a complete revision between 1935 and 1936 serving as the basis for the first part of her greatest ontological work *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*. Also with this work Stein made one last attempt to obtain a *Habilitation* (a German qualification allowing the holder to teach at University Level) and become a professor, which was ultimately refused. She was instead offered a position at the German Institute for Scientific Pedagogy in Münster where she taught two modules on the philosophical and theological structure of the human person between 1932 and 1933⁸. In 1933 she was relieved of this position due anti-Semitic legislation. In the same year she became a Carmelite nun: in her own words this decision fulfilled a lifelong wish, which had not been followed before because of the explicit encouragement of her spiritual adviser to do some good in the public world.

At this point Stein had been planning to give up academic work altogether, but was once again encouraged by her superiors to continue her

⁵ ESGA vol. 21-26.

⁶ *Husserls Phänomenologie und die Philosophie des hl. Thomas v. Aquino: Versuch einer Gegenüberstellung*, Stein, 1929.

⁷ ESGA 10.

⁸ ESGA 14 and 15.

work. Her mature writings on ontology, mysticism and spirituality were composed in the Carmelite cloister; along with *Finite and Eternal Being* which was completed in 1937. In 1942 Stein was deported and killed in Auschwitz. She was one of the Catholic members of religious orders killed in reprisal for the public criticism of Nazi policy towards the Jews by the Dutch Catholic Church. After her deportation, Stein's will was found among her papers and books: it had been written after she was transferred from the Cloister in Cologne to the one in Echt (Holland) in 1938 and in it she offered her life for the Jewish people *and* the Catholic Church.

1.3. Stein's decision to write on Heidegger's philosophy

This research focuses on a particular text by Stein, a short essay dedicated to Martin Heidegger's philosophy that she chose to append to her ontological work *Finite and Eternal Being - An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* along with a second appendix titled "Die Seelenburg" (*The Castle of the Soul*), after the work of St Theresa of Avila⁹. In Stein's original plan both appendices were to appear in the final edition of *Finite and Eternal Being*, and indeed they should be read as an extension of this work, because of the many links between them. Although Stein had already read *Being and Time* in 1927, when it was published, she was still working on her essay on Heidegger in 1936. In a letter to her friend, the phenomenologist Hedwig Conrad-Martius, she explained that she had terminated the book but was

⁹ Stein refers to *El Castillo Interior* or *Las Moradas* (*The Interior Castle* or *The Mansions*) written by *Saint Teresa* of Ávila in 1577.

still working and struggling with an appendix on Heidegger's philosophy¹⁰. Obviously, it was very important to Stein that the book would be published with this additional analysis.

Finite and Eternal Being was not published until after Stein's death despite various agreements and attempts to publish it were made before 1940, however, these were subsequently abandoned because of the non-Arian origins of its author. *Finite and Eternal Being* was firstly published posthumously in 1950 by Herder and Nauwelaerts, however this edition, like the three that followed, was not including the two appendices¹¹. It is only the most recent edition of ESGA (vol. 11/12) that has restored the original order of the book, as intended by Stein.

But why was Stein so keen to provide an evaluation of Heidegger's work? During and after her religious conversion to the Catholic faith Stein re-elaborates many concepts of classical and medieval Christian philosophy along with contemporary research on metaphysics; particularly she aims to merge Aquinas' philosophy with phenomenology. This was the scope of her *tractatus* on *Act and Potency* from 1931, however in *Finite and Eternal Being* Stein progresses from the doctrine of act and potency to conduct an 'inquiry into the meaning of being'.

Finite and Eternal Being contains many references to Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*; indeed, the first two chapters appear to be a direct confrontation with it. This is partly because Stein wrote the majority

¹⁰ On the 20 February 1936 Stein writes "*Jetzt habe ich die Arbeit an dem endlosen Opus wieder aufnehmen können. Seit vielen Wochen plage ich mich mit einem Anhang über Heideggers Existenzphilosophie*", letter nr 473 to Hedwig Conrad-Martius (ESGA 3, p. 221).

¹¹ See the Introduction to ESGA 11/12 by Andreas Uwe Müller.

of this manuscript after reading Heidegger's work and it made a strong impression on her, as she declared in the preface. Her personal need for an evaluation and her will to offer a response results in the decision to append the essay that is the object of this research. Stein gives an eloquent explanation for this decision:

"Finally, a word should be said about the relationship this book bears to the most significant efforts that have been made in our time to arrive to a foundation for metaphysics, namely, Martin Heidegger's *philosophy of existence* and its counterpart, the *ontology* [*Seinslehre*] embodied in the writings of Hedwig Conrad-Martius. At the time when the author was Husserl's assistant at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger's thinking was moving in the direction of phenomenology. This common interest in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl led to the author's personal acquaintance with Heidegger and to a first contact with his thought. The author's subsequent course in life and a change of environment caused the interruption of this contact. She read, however, Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) shortly after its publication and was deeply impressed by it, but without being able at that time to evaluate it objectively. Though the first acquaintance with Heidegger's great work dates back many years, certain reminiscences may have found their way into this present study. The desire, however, to confront these two decidedly different approaches to the meaning of being was not felt until after the conclusion of the work. This explains why the section dealing with Heidegger's philosophy of existence has been appended." (EES, p. xxxi).

1.4. The question of Heidegger's silence

Thanks to Stein's letters we have evidence that helps to reconstruct the personal contacts between her and Heidegger. After Stein leaves Freiburg she often comments on the state of things in Freiburg and the way that Husserl was placing absolute trust in Heidegger, who was instead making 'digs' at phenomenology and establishing his personal influence on students (ESGA 4, p. 143-144)). In 1931 she seeks advice from Heidegger when she submits her habilitation work *Act and Potency*. She describes how

Heidegger was friendly and offered encouragement, but also pointed out that it would have been difficult for him to support her submission because of her Catholic profile. On this occasion the two of them must have discussed Stein's ontological work at length, possibly Heidegger's too, and it is possible to speculate that Stein must have been pointing out at least some of her queries on the connection between phenomenology and ontology and the role of Christian metaphysics¹².

It is also important to point out that although 'Act and Potency' wasn't directly aimed at Heidegger's theories, it is after Stein reworks this manuscript and expands it into *Finite and Eternal Being* that the critique of Heidegger acquires a central role. It is therefore important to read the essay on Heidegger's philosophy along with *Finite and Eternal Being*, in the way presented here.

It is a great shame that Stein's book couldn't be published as planned, as it would have increased the chance that Heidegger could have read it. It is however uncertain whether he would have responded to the critique, mostly because he didn't do so when he was directly and openly criticised by others. As well as many admirers, Heidegger has many detractors who

¹² This meeting proves that Heidegger must have read at least part of Stein's book *Act and Potency* which was submitted for *Habilitation* at the University of Freiburg in 1931. During their meeting Heidegger explains that Stein should ask Martin Honeker for support (Honeker was a Catholic philosopher who held the *chair* in Catholic philosophy at *Freiburg University*). See Stein's letter to Ingarden on 25th December 1931 (ESGA 4, p. 225), and Stein letter to Heinrich Finke on 26 January 1931 (ESGA 1, p. 156).

openly criticised his philosophy¹³. Others criticised Heidegger's philosophy purely on the basis of his affiliation with the National Socialist party¹⁴.

More interesting for us are two short essays by Stein's friend and fellow phenomenologist Hedwig Conrad-Martius, who, like Stein, belonged to Husserl's close knot of phenomenologists in Göttingen. The first essay published first in 'Deutsche Zeitschrift' in 1932 with the title '*Heideggers Sein und Zeit*' and the second, more critical article, '*Existentielle Tiefe und Untiefe von Dasein und Ich*', which appeared in 'The Schildgenossen' in 1934¹⁵. Another important work which also must have influenced Stein is the essay written by the Jesuit Erich Przywara in 1928 *The Direction of Phenomenology*. Judith Wolfe rightly includes Przywara's and Stein's essays in a wider response to Heidegger from Neo-Scholastic Catholic theologians with phenomenological training (including also Romano Guardini and Hans

¹³ A famous attack is represented by the 1964 book by Theodor Adorno *The Jargon of Authenticity* which criticises the language and general conceptualisation of existential philosophy. Emmanuel Levinas also criticises Heidegger's project of a fundamental ontology in his essay from 1951 *Is Ontology fundamental?* (Adorno, 2007; Levinas, 1951. See also Inwood, 1997, p. 75 and p. 133).

¹⁴ To name a few: Hans Jonas, one of Heidegger's former students, and Jürgen Habermas who publicly called for an explanation from Heidegger after reading *Introduction to Metaphysics* which was alluding to the 'greatness' of National Socialism. See also the entry on Habermas in the *Stanford encyclopaedia of Philosophy*: "the latter's [Heidegger's] silence confirmed Habermas's conviction that the German philosophical tradition had failed in its moment of reckoning, providing intellectuals with the resources neither to understand nor to criticize National Socialism".

(Source: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas>).

¹⁵ Conrad-Martius, 1933; 1934. It isn't my aim to compare Stein's and Conrad-Martius' approach to Heidegger's philosophy, although such a comparison would be extremely interesting. It will suffice to note how both Stein and Conrad-Martius feel the need to assess Heidegger's work in an attempt to demonstrate a different use and understanding of phenomenology. As Stein quotes both Conrad-Martius and Heidegger as sources in the preface of *Finite and Eternal Being*, it is not incorrect to say that she saw their writing as complementary of each other: Heidegger's analysis of the existence of the subject on one side, Conrad-Martius investigation of nature and reality (as independent from the subject's perception) on the other (see also p. 37).

Urs von Balthasar, who was influenced by Przywara and Guardini (Wolfe, 2013, p, 151).

It is difficult, if not impossible, to try and give a reason for the fact that Heidegger didn't reply to any critique. We cannot be sure whether he was simply too busy with his work to care to reconsider his position, didn't feel the necessity to respond, or refused to dignify the critiques with an answer. A partial explanation of his silence can be found perhaps in the *Letter on Humanism*, which was written in 1945 to Jan Beaufret as a response to Sartre's attempt to define existentialism as a form of humanism, and it contains many critical remarks directed at Sartre (and indirectly to his detractors)¹⁶. However Heidegger is not interested in commenting on these critiques: "It is, everywhere, supposed that the attempt in *Sein und Zeit* ended in a blind alley. Let us not comment any further upon that opinion" (Heidegger, 1995, p. 75). Aside from small remarks such as this one, the letter is not intended as a response to a critique, but rather as clarification of his thought. Indeed rather than addressing questions posed from the outside, Heidegger generally seemed more concerned that his own philosophy was appropriately understood.

¹⁶ (Heidegger, 2004). Heidegger also wrote a letter to Sartre on 28 October 1945, Sartre never replied. One of the reasons behind Heidegger's letter was a proposed public debate between him and Sartre, which never took place. It is also important to note that this exchange happened in a time when Heidegger was banned from teaching for political reasons (after the post war hearings and his ban from teaching, Heidegger was classified in 1949 as a *Mitläufer* or Nazi follower. The teaching ban was lifted in 1951 and Heidegger was nominated emeritus in 1953) and keen to reestablish his links with the academic world (see Introduction of the Italian edition by Franco Volpi in Heidegger, *Lettera sull'Umanismo*, Adelphi 1995, p. 13-14).

In the famous interview for *Der Spiegel* magazine in 1966 Heidegger discusses some of the criticism related to his political involvement, therefore the published version of the interview *Only a God can save us* (which was largely edited by Heidegger himself) can be considered his only open response to criticism¹⁷.

1.5. Literature review

A new complete collection of Stein's works was completed in 2012 under the supervision of Professor Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz (Technical University of Dresden) and the Edith Stein Archive in Cologne: this edition includes new autobiographical documents, a critical apparatus of historical remarks and notes explaining the timeline of her works along with the differences between early and late manuscripts¹⁸. This extensive new material provides a wealth of information concerning the historical background and the theoretical sources that influenced Stein's works. The now standard critical edition ESGA is composed of 27 volumes and includes a) biographical writings, letters and documents, b) philosophical writings, c) writings on anthropology and education, e) writings on mysticism and spirituality and f) translation.

¹⁷ In 1966, Heidegger gave an interview for *Der Spiegel* magazine, in which he discussed his political past. The interview was published posthumously (on his request) in 1976 with the title *Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten (Only a God can Save Us)*; see Heidegger, 1976.

¹⁸ I am referring to the *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe*, (ESGA), which has replaced the previous series *Edith Steins Werke* (ESW). ESGA is published by Herder (Freiburg in Breisgau); the previous ESW was the first edition of Stein's writings and consisted of only nine works of Stein and a biography written by Romaeus Leuven.

As previously mentioned in the first edition of works ESW a few texts were misplaced and wrongly dated. It is here worth mentioning a short essay originally titled by the publisher “Nature, Freedom, Grace” and included in the volume IV of ESW, as it was assumed being part of Stein’s notes for the lecture on the structure of the human person, composed between 1930 and 1931. However, as demonstrated by Claudia Mariele Wulf, it was actually written between 1918 and 1920, a fact that puts in an all new light some of the content of this particular essay, as I will explain in chapter 2¹⁹. Stein’s epistolary collection has also been enriched, and the complete body of her translation work is now available and demonstrates her wide interests and sources (ESGA 21-27), which includes Stein’s translation of Aquinas and Cardinal John Henry Newman.

Edith Stein’s most important writings have being translated into English, Italian, French and Spanish: the English translation series *The Collected Works of Edith Stein* (CWES) currently consists of 11 volumes.²⁰

As a consequence of this extensive editorial project Stein’s philosophical writings have been investigated by a new generation of scholars, keen to draw attention to the role she played in the phenomenological movement as well as the significance of her works in the context of contemporary ethical questions.

Currently there aren’t any monographs entirely dedicated to the particular topic of Stein’s critique of Heidegger, with the exception of the

¹⁹ See p. 41.

²⁰ In this thesis I will quote (for existing translations) from the English translation series *The Collected Works of Edith Stein* (CWES), published by the Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington, which currently consists of 11 volumes.

Italian volume *Edith Stein e l'uomo non redento di Martin Heidegger* by Marco Paolinelli, which includes a new Italian translation of Stein's essay on Heidegger's philosophy, preceded by an historical introduction which describes the life of both authors and their philosophical development²¹ (Paolinelli, 2011).

While the bibliography of Edith Stein is large and constantly growing, there are only a few published articles and essays that analyse specifically her connection to Heidegger or are more generally aimed to present the similarities between the two authors. Amongst them are: *Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger* by John Nota S. J., who personally met Edith Stein in 1942 (Nota, 1987), *Edith Steins Auseinandersetzung mit Martin Heideggers Existentialphilosophie*, by Lina Börsig-Hover (Börsig-Hover, 1991), *La persona come apertura all'Essere Eterno secondo Edith Stein. Primo tentativo di confronto con M. Heidegger* by Michele D'Ambra (D' Ambra, 1994). More recent articles include: *Die Fülle oder das Nichts?: Martin Heidegger and Edith Stein on the Question of Being* by Antonio Calcagno, originally a book chapter, later published as article (Calcagno, 2007); *Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger on the Meaning of Being*, by Mette Lebech (Lebech, 2006), who also translated Stein's critique in English (Lebech, 2007); *On Human Being: A Dispute between Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger* (Wilk, 2007); *Do We Die Alone? Edith Stein's Critique of Heidegger* by Ken Casey (Casey, 2012), *The Difference for Philosophy: Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger* (Ballard, 2007),

²¹ The first part of this book is a summary of the academic course in History of Philosophy taught by Paolinelli at the Università Cattolica in Milan in 2010/11. The topic of the course was the analysis Stein's essay on Heidegger and the volume is published by EDUCatt, which is the Foundation of the Università Cattolica.

Die Such nach der Modernen Metaphysik. Edith Steins Heidegger-Exzerpte, eine Kritik der Metaphysik des Daseins by Anna Jani (Jani, 2012) and a recent article by James Orr published in 'Modern Theology': "*Being and Timelessness*": *Edith Stein's critique of Heideggerian temporality* (Orr, 2014).

I have found Wilk's and Casey's articles very useful, as they both focus specifically on the issue of death and dying, while Orr and Calcagno investigate in depth Stein's views on after-death and temporality (Calcagno does this also in another article titled *Being, Aevum, and nothingness*. Calcagno, 2008).

Only a few books on Edith Stein highlight in depth her critique of Heidegger, particularly "Unterscheidung as Naehe: Edith Stein und Heidegger" in *Unerbittliches Licht. Edith Stein: Philosophie – Mystik – Leben* (Gerl, 1991, pp. 95 – 101), clearly sees Stein's critique of Heidegger as an essential stage of her philosophical development. Gerl-Falkovitz wonders especially if Stein attempts to justify Heidegger's position from the point of view of his philosophical *procedere*, and if this attempt is not in fact the driving force behind the writing of *Finite and Eternal Being* (Gerl, 1991, p. 104).

Amongst recently published volumes that had the great merit of renewing the interest on Stein's philosophy for the wide English-speaking audience, it is necessary to mention *Edith Stein, A Philosophical Prologue*, by Alasdair MacIntyre, which contains a few remarks on Stein's critique of Heidegger in its final chapter (MacIntyre, 2006, p. 184). A recent book on

Heidegger by Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology: Theological Horizons in M. Heidegger's Early Work* (Wolfe, 2013, p. 149) highlights the way that Phenomenology and Neo-scholasticism reacted to Heidegger's philosophy. In this book Wolfe provides a sharp evaluation of how Catholic theologians respond to Heidegger: Edith Stein's critique is praised by Wolfe for sensitively pointing out Heidegger's dogmatism, particularly in regard to the way Heidegger discusses the event of death. However she also wonders if the difference between Stein's Thomism and Heidegger's Lutheran sensibilities are not one of the reasons behind their opposite use of phenomenology to analyse human existence²².

Another important source of information which helps to reconstruct the relationship between these two authors is offered by several scholarly articles which describe the role of Stein in the phenomenological movements in general and in Husserl's circle in particular. Amongst the ones I found particularly interesting, the articles written by Stein's fellow phenomenologist Roman Ingarden on her activity as Husserl's assistant (Ingarden, 1979), by Reiner Sepp (Sepp, 1988) and the article 'Edith Stein und Freiburg' by the historian Hugo Ott (Ott, 1993), clearly stand out.

Finally Stein's autobiography (ESGA 1) along with her letters to and from the former members of the phenomenological circle (ESGA 2, 3, 4), are an essential resource to reconstruct her connection to Heidegger at the time before, and during, the conception and writing of her critique.

²² See also p. 125. Wolfe has recently published a new book *Heidegger and Theology* (2014), which unfortunately could not be examined for this research.

Chapter 2. Opposite routes and a common question

In this chapter I look at the political, religious and philosophical context behind the work of Stein and Heidegger in the period between World War I and World War II. I explain Stein's and Heidegger's connection with Husserl and the role that phenomenology plays in their early work; in particular Stein's interest in a phenomenology of life experience, and her attempt to enlarge the borders of her philosophical investigation. I also show their struggle for independent and personal research; their interest in the question of being, and the connection between newly discovered religious beliefs and Neo-Scholasticism. Heidegger's way 'out' of the system of Catholicism stands out in contrast to the growing number of religious conversions, and I look briefly at his early years, and specifically at his explanation of the structure of a philosophical investigation (as opposed to a theological one), as delineated in *Phenomenology and Theology*²³.

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²³ This is the title of a lecture delivered in March 1927 (Heidegger and McNeill, 1998).

2.1. Preliminary remarks

Stein and Heidegger moved along a close path for a few crucial years in Freiburg, when they were both setting the foundation for their future academic careers. Both worked as assistants to Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology, until Heidegger replaced Stein as Husserl's assistant after she left the position in 1918. During this period they both had privileged access to Husserl's most recent works and enjoyed his trust and guidance and they both published their early phenomenological works in Husserl's *Yearbook for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (hereafter *JPPF*). The journal was founded in 1912 by Husserl with Moritz Geiger, Alexander Pfänder, Adolf Reinach and Max Scheler and became the official journal of the phenomenological circle, which published significant articles by members of the movement from 1913 to 1930 and later Oskar Becker and Martin Heidegger also became editors.²⁴

When reading the contributions of Husserl's students to his journal, one finds that the frequent 'philosophical discussions' within the scholarly circle and in other occasions were a clear influence on all participants, since most of them share an interest for similar topics in their research. Another factor

²⁴ The first issue of the journal, *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, was published in 1913 and contained Husserl's *Ideas*. In the following years the journal hosted some of the defining writings of phenomenology, including Husserl's *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (edited by Heidegger), Scheler's *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, Conrad-Martius' *Realontologie*, Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* and *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and three contributions by Stein: *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften* (1922), *Eine Untersuchung über den Staat* (1925) and *Husserls Phänomenologie und die Philosophie des heiligen Thomas v. Aquino* (1929, in the special edition of the yearbook dedicated to Husserl's 70th birthday).

that is essential to consider is the rich and stimulating intellectual, political and religious environment that Stein and Heidegger were both moving in, which was particularly fervent in the years following WWI. As for the intent of their work, both authors aimed to solve one of the most ancient philosophical questions, the question of the meaning of being, and in doing so they discussed and evaluated past and present philosophical history, starting from Aristotle's ontological difference, through to the medieval proofs of God's existence, up to Cartesian methodological doubt. They both made use of a sound knowledge of Christian ontology and dealt with the contemporary perspectives of Husserl's phenomenological revolution, Scheler's personalism and ethical anthropology, neo-scholasticism and modernism, which were shaking the grounds of the traditional academic system at that time. It is also important to consider their position in the phenomenological movement and the influence of Husserl on them both, especially in the light of Stein's conversion to Catholicism and the much-debated matter of Heidegger's religiosity. Both authors ultimately provided the basis for a new independent and innovative way of dealing with the question of being, and in doing so inevitably re-defined what the 'human being' actually is.

Considering all of these elements, Stein's interest in analysing, understanding and evaluating the philosophical position of Heidegger, should come as no surprise. In fact the impact of *Being and Time*, which first appears in 1927, is such that many others felt the urge to comment and respond to Heidegger's work. However the fact that such original proximity

of intent and academic work leads these authors to extremely distant, antithetic positions deserves deeper consideration, especially with regards to their work's significance and their contribution to today's philosophy.

In order to evaluate Stein's work, and the extent to which her attempt to answer Heidegger's position is justified, a few more historic remarks are necessary to highlight the multifaceted political, religious and philosophical context of these two authors and to determine the significance of their works.

2.2. Edith Stein and the care for society

At the core of Stein's work is the interconnection between philosophy, religion, ethics and human life. She researches the human being as a philosophical object and analyses it from different points of view: ontology, psychology, politics and social studies, gender, education, theology, value theory and mysticism. It is an impressively multi-faceted and inter-related body of work, which forms a well-rounded theory of the person.

An important element of Stein's thought is the maturation of her political consciousness, which guided her throughout her life and is essential to understand her moral imperative of 'doing what is right'. She strongly believed in the importance of a participative role of the individual in the community and reconciled her own Jewish origins with her German political identity. Stein grew up in Breslau (then in German Silesia, today the city of Wroclaw in Poland), and considered herself a 'Prussian' and Jewish citizen,

as she declared in her *curriculum vitae* (ESGA 1, p. 364). Educated in the Jewish faith, she welcomed it for family tradition and general interest rather than out of personal belief and described herself as an atheist while at university. During her early student years she joined a left-oriented, liberal group supporting the Women Students' Union and campaigning to enable women to vote. At the outbreak of WWI she chose to drop out of University and volunteer for the Red Cross, putting on hold her State examinations in order to 'do her part' for her country. The love for her country and her concern for the political situation and the increasing hatred for Jews was also behind Stein's decision to write an autobiography entitled *Life in a Jewish Family*, which she started composing in September 1933 (ESGA 1).

As explained in the introduction, she wanted to give an honest account of the experience of the Jewish population, which was not composed of 'rich capitalist, political subverts and impudent intellectuals' as presented by the propaganda machine, but of employees, neighbours and schoolmates of German citizens, whom she grew to know in time, as they lived in close proximity. Stein's condemnation of the totalitarian indoctrination, which also emerges in her essay on the state published in 1925, is again discussed and is explained in the letter she wrote in 1933 to Pope Pius XI, where she begged him to take a public stand against the current actions of the German government and she also predicted the tragic future consequences, not only for the Jews, but also for the Catholic community:

"the responsibility must fall, after all, on those who brought them to this point and it also falls on those who keep silent in the face of such happenings. Everything that happened and continues to happen on a daily

basis originates with a government that calls itself "Christian". For weeks not only Jews but also thousands of faithful Catholics in Germany, and, I believe, all over the world, have been waiting and hoping for the Church of Christ to raise its voice to put a stop to this abuse of Christ's name. Is not this idolization of race and governmental power which is being pounded into the public consciousness by the radio's open heresy?"²⁵

After obtaining her doctoral title in 1916 with a dissertation dedicated to the analysis of empathic experiences, Stein worked as Edmund Husserl's private assistant and contributed to the editing of some of his most important manuscripts. She left this position in 1919 but continued to work on strictly phenomenological subjects until 1921. In this period she wrote four phenomenological essays, her doctoral thesis "On the Problem of Empathy", which was published in 1917, and the essays "Sentient Causality" (1918), "Individual and Community" (1919) and "On the State" (1921), all written in the final stages and immediately after her collaboration with Husserl in Freiburg and published in the Yearbook of the phenomenological circle (JPPF) between 1922 and 1925. The two essays "Sentient Causality" and "Individual and Community" were published together under the title '*Contributions to a Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*'²⁶. Both contributions were intended to be Stein's *Habilitation* dissertation and these works were independent attempts to investigate and further expand particular topics of Husserl's phenomenology. She offers her views as both a corrective to, and an argumentation of Husserl's second book, *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (*Ideas*

²⁵ English translation of the original German letter by Mrs. Suzanne Batzdorff, niece of Edith Stein, Sr. Josephine Köppel, and Rev. Dr. John Sullivan, published for the Discalced Carmelites of *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*.

Online source: <http://www.baltimorecarmel.org/saints/Stein/letter%20to%20pope.html>

²⁶ *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften* (ESGA 6) appeared first in JPPF 1922.

pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy)²⁷.

Stein intended that her ideas would underpin a range of additional investigations connected to Husserl's on-going project. In particular she addressed issues raised by the constitution-analysis: how the sentient subject relates to nature, the world, and others. For her doctoral thesis Stein chose to fill in what she believed to be a gap left by Husserl: the nature of the empathic experience. In the second book of *Ideas* Husserl described a modality through which the external world can be experienced by related subjects, individuals who are interconnected in a participative manner. Husserl calls this connection state 'emphatic experience' but does not provide any deeper account of what this actually means. The term caught Stein's attention and she decided to write her first personal phenomenological work about it.

Stein's attraction to the topic of empathy was, without a doubt, the result of her political consciousness and her belief that personal participation in the life of a community belongs to the essential traits of the human person and should characterise its actions and its moral values. The Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden, also a phenomenologist, a scholar of Husserl and a close friend of Stein, offers an account of the theoretical directions of Stein's research.

"What interested her most was the question of defining the possibility of mutual communication between human beings, in other

²⁷ Husserl 1950, 1952. Hereafter *Ideas*.

words, the possibility of establishing community. This was more than a theoretical concern for her; belonging to a community was a personal necessity, something that vitally affected her identity. [...] It's also clear, as I learned from her recollection that she needed to belong to a national community – to think of herself as a member of a particular country. I still remember how she went through the entire war with the attitude of someone always on the verge of beginning a one-man battle. She was determined to serve; there was no question about it. During the time she worked as Husserl's graduate assistant, she wrote me letter after letter asking whether she had the right to waste her time on philosophy and other such nonsense when there were people out there dying whom we should be helping. Thus, we can see that it was essential to her personally that a community of this sort should exist, and that what she was doing was examining the theoretical foundation necessary for such community. Later on, in "The Individual and the Community", she considered the various ways that relationships can be established between individuals, and here again empathy appears precisely as one of these possibilities. All these issues were closely interrelated in her thinking." (Ingarden, 1979, p. 472).

In the following years Stein concentrated on the phenomenological constitution of the community, a topic that was at the heart of the Göttingen philosophical circle, and on its psychological foundation. However at the heart of Stein's body of work is the constitution of the human person: all her phenomenological analysis and writings on society, education, anthropology and gender prepared the basis for Stein's mature philosophy and later ontological theory of the person, which is central for the comparison with Heidegger in this thesis. In fact, her focus on the social and psychological life of the human subject, in her essays written between 1917 and 1921, demonstrates Stein's innovative take on phenomenology.

2.3. Phenomenology and the human person

In developing Husserl's theories further, Stein addresses many anthropological and social issues of her time, in line with other members of the philosophical circle who focused on the phenomenology of religious experience, of moral values and of emotions. Her research progresses from phenomenological analysis of the different layers of the human person towards a phenomenological ontology of the person. This progression can be rightly described as an independent and original use of Husserl's phenomenology, which Stein applies in a personal way. In tracing the connection from Stein's first phenomenological writing on empathy to *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, Lebech identified an early set of works (the three tractates on sentient causality, individual and community and the state), which complete the phenomenological foundation and analyse the constitution of the human being in its sentient (psyche) and spiritual (mind) parts (Lebech, 2004). The second stage is represented by the two works *The Structure of the Human Person* and *What is the Human Being?* which Stein composed in 1932-32 for her courses in philosophical anthropology and theology at the academy in Münster. The final stage, which Stein called her spiritual testament, is the ontological study *Finite and Eternal Being*, which is largely based on the analysis of her previous works as well as on Stein's study of Scholasticism. However, Lebech reminds us that:

"It was the importance of empathy that made her stand in a certain contrast with Husserl, and it was also empathy that enabled her to use Scheler's insight's concerning morality more constructively than Husserl

did. The topics she discussed – the foundation of psychology and the humanities – required this sensitivity to intersubjectivity and its moral dimension, as both of these sciences are concerned with the individual as a producer of meaning and as a member of communities.”(Lebech, 2004, p. 2)

Phenomenology teaches that the world around us can be grasped and understood by the direct experience of foreign objects or ‘phenomena’. After a long tradition of cognitive philosophy and Kantian Idealism, which was centred on the ethics of ‘how’ the subject experiences the world and the nature of mind and consciousness, Husserl’s method brings attention back to the object itself, which can be accessed (in fact ‘encountered’) in a scientific way. Phenomena (objects of experience) can be of all kinds: physical things, emotions, feelings, judgments, values, the self and, of course, other individuals. The essence of phenomena is what is given to us in the act of experience and it is disclosed, it reveals itself to us, after an analytic process, a ‘reduction’, which consists of ‘bracketing’ the existence of the physical world. In the process of experience both the subject and the object can be doubted, their existence questioned and any other preconceptions that we receive from any other sources outside of the direct immediate experience of the object is considered to be irrelevant. The only elements that cannot be questioned are the conscious activities of the first person (the ‘pure I’) and the essence of the act of experience itself.

The understanding of how the cognitive ‘I’, the human being, encounters others fascinated Stein, and she aimed to investigate how the experience of others enrich and complete the subject in return: I am given (by the other) to myself as “a psychological individual in the full sense. My

awareness of myself which is integral to my being and my being in the world is constituted through interactions with others, particularly acts of reiterated empathy” (ESGA 5, p. 58). In doing so, Stein applied the phenomenological method in an original way in a field that traditionally belonged to psychology and social sciences, welcoming the contributions of philosophical anthropology (particularly the phenomenological understanding of Max Scheler, as I will later highlight). In her further writings she focuses on the interconnections between the individual, intellectual, sensory and physical levels of the person.

Finite and Eternal Being completes a series of work that, if viewed together, build a concentric analysis from the ‘outer’ elements that constitute the human being (its place in the community, the body and its psychophysical reactions) towards the core of the human being, the significance of the human soul, the spiritual strength (lifeforce/lifepower), the source of faith and finally the ineffable ‘depth’ of the human person. Stein’s last book *The Science of the Cross* (*Kreuzwissenschaft*, ESGA 18), which she writes between 1941 and 1942 and which is left incomplete, is a study of the life and doctrine of a Carmelitan Saint, the Mystical Doctor St. John of the Cross.

The extent of Stein’s contribution to the phenomenological movement of her time in general, and to the writing of Edmund’s Husserl in particular, has been widely discussed. It is not the aim of this work to give an account of Stein’s contributions to phenomenology, however it will suffice here to remark on how she made Husserl’s work accessible by filling in the gaps in

his theories with personal contributions and by meticulously editing his manuscripts.

Stein took on the enormous task of organising Husserl's manuscripts with great professionalism and enthusiasm for what she understood as a collaborative enterprise, in the same way as intended by Adolf Reinach in Göttingen. She possessed a sound knowledge of the methodology and of the way Husserl worked, as she had discussed philosophical problems with him in private discussions and public seminars for years. Husserl's phenomenology was constantly debated by him and his circle of scholars, and some of his more elaborate theories were to be developed and refined during such discussions: in a short article which appeared in 1962 in the *Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Roman Ingarden defended her legacy from the accusation of altering and deforming Husserl's thought (advanced by P. M. Schultz in *Revue Philosophique* 1960): "she studied under Husserl for many years, read a great number of his manuscripts, and discusses scientific subjects with him hundreds of times in private conversations. It is well known to me, that during such discussions with his direct disciples Husserl used to develop some of his best and deepest thoughts. Moreover, his phenomenology was constantly discussed at that time in the circles of young phenomenologists." (Ingarden, 1962, p. 156).

Stein's work on the second book of Husserl's *Ideas*, far from being only a translation and adaptation of shorthand notes, consisted of rewriting and completing entire sections. In particular she documented and retraced

passages on intersubjectivity in the second and third book of *Ideas*²⁸ and composed Appendix XII which is dedicated to the theme of person, spirit and soul. This fact is very important if we attempt to reconstruct the beginning of Stein's independent work and – more importantly – her independent research. As Ingarden, who was more than familiar with Husserl's way of working, having studied with him in Göttingen and Freiburg, described in the previously cited article, her position as Husserl's private assistant authorised her to introduce editorial changes and section titles and compose bridge paragraphs to create an organic text from multiple fragments. Furthermore, the writings required much work in order to be made readable, and since it was almost impossible to convince Husserl to review old manuscripts, because he was quickly bored of old material and constantly moving towards new projects, Stein had to elaborate the content from various fragments and introduce explanatory sections or changes to the structure of the text. Husserl's later assistants, Landgrebe and Fink, did the same: the second book of *Ideas* was finally published posthumously in 1952, however, in this case it is known that Husserl did review the final draft.

In the same article Ingarden explained how he had the chance to view Husserl's manuscript of the lectures on *Internal Consciousness of Time* in 1927 (Husserl, 1928), which had been transcribed by Edith Stein and had been left untouched since, and how he was offered the task to review and

²⁸ See XII: I) *Die Person – der Geist und sein seelischer Untergrund*; II) *Subjektivität als Seele und als Geist in Naturwissenschaftlicher und in Geisteswissenschaftlicher Einstellung* in *Ideas II*.

elaborate on it for a future publication, a task he ultimately refused. He also reports how shortly after he was offered this task, Heidegger became aware of the existence of the manuscript and convinced Husserl to publish it, noting how the final version of it presented minimal changes from the copy transcribed by Stein.

Husserl trusted Stein with his writings because he knew her to be not only fully qualified to act on his manuscripts but also capable of independent phenomenological research; he had also previously commented on how parts of Stein's doctoral thesis on empathy anticipated some of his own theories from the second book of *Ideas II* (ESGA 1, p. 340). Since Stein had a chance to view the manuscript of *Ideas II* only after presenting her thesis; it is clear that her work on empathy is the result of personal research. When compared with Husserl's work it is evident that Stein was moving on a parallel route, particularly if we compare their analysis of constitution. In the foreword of Stein's tractate on 'Sentient Causality' Stein explained:

"I've been helping Professor Husserl for nearly two years with the preparation of large publications. During this time, all his manuscripts from the last ten years have been at my disposal (among them those that have to do with the topic of psychology and the humanities as well). It goes without saying that important influences on my work came out of the stimulation that I was receiving in this way and in many conversations. Today I myself no longer am able to keep track of the extent to which this has been the case." (Stein and Sawicki, 2000, p. 2)

Stein's interest focused on the analysis of how a foreign subject constitutes itself as 'other' and how "I" can participate in the feeling (*mit-fühlen*) and share/comprehend the experience of another subject, who is given to me as a *whole* along with the experience, which is recognised as an

experience of another I. When Husserl describes the inter-subjective experience of the Ego in the surrounding world and he defines 'motivation' as the basic law that regulates spiritual life, he describes "webs of motivation" running through "the unitary intentionality in which a thing is given to me in one stroke" (*Ideas II* §56, p. 236). In a similar way Stein defines the description of self-awareness and the givenness of the other subject as previously seen in the analysis of empathy: the fact that I am given by the other to myself.

Husserl's account of how the world constitutes itself for the 'I' through individual streams of consciousness and through empathy seems to exclude the possibility of a solipsistic I, much like the Kantian 'ego'. In *Ideas II* Husserl makes it extremely clear that it is only in the encounter with the psychic life and the bodies of others that the subject can apprehend its own subjectivity. However he later takes what appears to be a turn to a transcendental idealism by concluding that the constitution of the world can be already achieved on the level of pure (transcendental) consciousness, which excludes the aspect of the bodily life of the I and the natural world around it.

Like many scholars, Stein too struggles with this direction, especially because she has doubts regarding the relationship between a real physical body (the subject experiences its I as embodied) and a fully constituted

world of nature, therefore she sets up to demonstrate how personal embodiment is phenomenologically indispensable²⁹.

Stein's analysis on empathy had revealed a human being that is deeply rooted in the world, and that what it feels, encounters, and perceives has a bodily aspect (the redness of the face that communicated my embarrassment, the look of the other person that answers to mine). She is worried that Husserl's focus on how the world constitutes itself for a pure *transcendental consciousness*, will lead to a new Idealism (ESGA 4, p. 46). A dualism between nature - spirit, in this case between physical body - embodied consciousness³⁰. In a letter to her friend and colleague Roman Ingarden, she clearly confessed how, after long consideration, she had come to a breakthrough on the concept of 'constitution', which she can only fully understand in a break with (Husserl's) idealism: "An absolutely existing physical nature on the one hand, a distinctly structured subjectivity on the other, seem to me to be prerequisites before an intuitive nature can constitute itself. I haven't yet found the courage to confess this heresy to the *Meister* [this was the affectionate name that scholars used to refer to

²⁹ See the analysis of Sawicki in *Body, Text, and Science: the literacy of investigative practices and the phenomenology of Edith Stein*, 1997. However the fact that I have a body does not comes before constitution, as it is well explained by Lebech in her article *Stein's Phenomenology of the Body: The constitution of the human being between description of experience and social construction*: "Stein does not think that the body is the principle of individuation of the I (as does for example Aquinas, whom she later will criticise for this), nor that it is „before“ constitution as Marianne Sawicki claims it is in her otherwise brilliant analysis of Stein's editorial work on Ideas II (Body, Text and Science). The latter would have compromised Stein's adherence to the phenomenological method. The body is constituted, for Stein, because it is the best way of making sense of what we in fact experience, but this is a matter of fact, not of necessity. Also, the body could not be prior to constitution as nothing can be, given that constitution is identification". (Lebech, 2008, p. 18).

³⁰ Stein reports how many of Husserl former students couldn't follow him in this alleged 'return to Kant' which seemed to nullify Husserl's greatest merit: the centrality of the object. (*Die Weltanschauliche Bedeutung der Phänomenologie*, ESW IV, p. 11).

Husserl]” (Letter to Ingarden from 3 February 1917, in ESGA 4, p. 40). A few months after writing these words, Stein left her position with Husserl to pursue her own research.

At this point we can make three important observations:

- Although enormously indebted to Husserl’s method and early research topics, Stein’s phenomenology has a strong identity already in this early phase. Stein’s main interest is the analysis of the person and of personal experience; ‘how’ we meet others and how the experience of others and of the world ‘enriches’ and completes my understanding of myself. The focus is always on the structure and the complexity of the person, which is never fully represented by the notion of pure consciousness.
- To progress in this research direction she analysed the structure of community, society and psychological experiences in detail: her personal interest and engagement in the political life of Germany and her quest for a professional affirmation behind the social and political limitations of her time act as a motivational force, while she maintains an intellectual and scientific impartiality in her writings.
- Husserl’s phenomenology proved to be lacking a reasonable description of the important role played by the physical body, which is central to Stein’s understanding of the human person. These doubts already emerged in 1917-18 with Stein’s disagreement on the topic of ‘constitution’.

Stein understands philosophical research as a collective enterprise and she makes use of different strands of phenomenology (Scheler’s philosophical

anthropology and Conrad-Martius real-ontology in particular)³¹ in an attempt to find a solution to this problem. In the same way she will incorporate Aquinas's thought and existential insights into her later work.

Although it is generally established that Stein's mature philosophical work was completed after her religious conversion and her admission to the Discalced Carmelites where she spent her later life, her contribution to phenomenology is still often overlooked. All four attempts made by Stein to obtain a *Habilitation* and become a professor failed; for reasons connected to her gender, to her race and to a lack of support from her former teacher. As Sawicki suggests, in the difficult scenario of post-war Germany, with all forms of social, intellectual and cultural life confused and affected by personal and political belief, Stein would have probably wanted to continue her research into "the kinds of social formations that would best provide for the welfare and flourishing of human beings", guided by her sense of participation and her aspirations for a better society and higher moral values: "It's hard to keep from asking: if gender prejudice had not denied Stein an academic career, and if a university appointment had enabled her to continue her research and publishing, would her voice not have offered answers to these questions very different from the ones that National

³¹ Stein had read with great interest Scheler's *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Hass* from 1913. In her work on empathy she also quoted Scheler's *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (Scheler, 1913). Hedwig Conrad-Martius was a close personal friend and Stein's godmother from her baptism in 1922: the two phenomenologists often shared notes and drafts of their works and reviewed each other's writings. Stein was particularly impressed by Conrad-Martius' *Zur Ontologie und Erscheinungslehre der realen Außenwelt. Verbunden mit einer Kritik positivistischer Theorien*, published in the Yearbook in 1916. Later Stein would quote Conrad-Martius's *Realontologie* as a source for her ontological investigation in *Finite and Eternal Being*.

Socialism gave? What if Husserl's successor had been she, not Heidegger?"
(Sawicki, 1998).³²

2.4. From Psychology to Ontology

While the phenomenological language speaks of 'consciousness' and the 'pure' undetermined I, Stein always highlights the importance of the 'person'. She identifies herself as a realist phenomenologist, unable to fully follow Husserl on his path to the study of transcendental pure consciousness.

After her early studies in Breslau characterized by an interest in German, history and psychology, Stein was impressed by reading Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (published in 1900-01) and decided impulsively to leave her hometown and move to Göttingen, to be able to study with Husserl himself. There are many elements behind this decision that must be considered: the first is a personal need to search for truth, which is already evident in the young Stein who distinguished herself very early by her intellectual abilities and strong academic aspirations. In the light of her later life it is dramatically ironic that she could never obtain the professorship to which she aspired. The second, most important element behind this decision

³² Sawicki poses these questions at the end of the lecture *Personal Connections: The Phenomenology of Edith Stein* delivered at St. John's University in New York on October 15, 1998, and repeated at the Carmelite Monastery in Baltimore on November 13, 1998 (Sawicki, 2004). Quoted from online version: http://library.nd.edu/colldev/subject_home_pages/catholic/personal_connections.shtml

is the discovery that psychology could not provide the scientific foundation and the ultimate clarification that she was searching for. Stein studied in Breslau with William Stern, who was working on 'personalistic' psychology and refining his later theory of human individuality and intelligence. These are the years during which Sigmund Freud wrote his major works on psychoanalysis and the topic of human consciousness was at the heart of the philosophical debate:

"She wanted to understand how the mind works, what troubles afflict the heart, and how to heal the soul. Remember, now, that the year is 1911, Edith is 19, and the sciences undergirding the psychiatry and psychology of today have not yet been born. Over in Vienna, Sigmund Freud is puzzling over those neurotic lady patients, while on the Susquehanna, a 7-year-old named B.F. Skinner is trying in vain to train chipmunks. The term "psychology" still means a branch of philosophy. In other words, psychoanalysis, behaviourism, and the other foundational theories of psychology, as we know it, are just taking shape. University professors and their students are devising the first controlled laboratory experiments to investigate the processes of sensory perception. They are trying to figure out, if you will, how to think about thinking, how to do so reliably, productively, and scientifically. Some are guided in this endeavor, as Edith discovers, by a two-volume work called *Logical Investigations*, published in 1900-01 by Edmund Husserl. So Edith Stein, age 21, decides to transfer to the University of Göttingen to study with Husserl and become initiated into the new philosophy of science called "phenomenology." (Sawicki, 2004)³³

Stein describes psychology as a science still in its 'infant' state and lacking a strong scientific method: "a 'natural' or 'dogmatic' science, a theoretical exploration of certain objects that we meet up with within 'the world' [...] In this world, alongside material things and living organisms, we

³³ Quoted from *Personal Connections: The Phenomenology of Edith Stein*, 1998 (see previous footnote).

also encounter human beings and beasts who, apart from what they have in common with things and with mere organisms, manifest certain peculiarities that they alone display. The totality of those peculiarities is what we call sentience, and its exploration is the task of psychology” (Stein and Sawicki, 2000, p. 6-7). Psychology is therefore for Stein an ingenuous science that doesn’t engage in the actual consideration of the essential constitution of its objects. Each object in the world presents itself (‘phenomenon’ from the Greek verb *phainomai*, ‘I appear, I reveal myself’) in all its ‘fullness and concretion’ to a subject’s consciousness corresponding to it. The method to analyse ‘the constitution of objects in consciousness’ was what Husserl – then a young professor at the University of Göttingen, who was starting to attract much attention because of his revolutionary theories - claimed to have discovered: a new philosophical approach, a solid foundation to all knowledge, a compromise between the positive-naturalistic method and Kant’s idealism. It was an innovative idea that many could not trust or understand at that time but it seemed to offer enormous possibilities and needed people to start working on it. It is with this intention that Stein decided to learn the new method directly from Husserl.

It has been debated whether Stein abandoned phenomenology after her conversion, or more simply whether she failed to follow Husserl’s turn to idealistic phenomenology. In the difficult years after her resignation as Husserl’s assistant in Freiburg and before her conversion, she composed a short essay with the title “Nature, Freedom, Grace” (*Natur, Freiheit, Gnade*. Stein, 1962) which was never published and contains very interesting hints

to help reconstruct this turning point in her life, at a time between the end of her work with Husserl and the decision to become Catholic (she was baptised in 1921). This short text was misunderstood due to a controversial situation: in the first edition of Stein's work (ESW) the essay 'Nature, Freedom, Grace' had been wrongly titled and dated and it was assumed that it was part of Stein's material for the lecture on the structure of the human person and therefore was composed between 1930 and 1931. However a recent analysis by Claudia Mariele Wulf demonstrated that it actually belongs to Stein's early analysis from between 1918 and 1920.³⁴ This is extremely interesting for two main reasons: the first is that in this essay Stein makes an explicit connection to the Gospel and to religious texts, proving how far she was in her intellectual preparation towards her conversion. The second and most important element is that Stein briefly interprets in this text the philosophical concepts of *Angst* (anguish) and *Sorge* (care), which became famous with the interpretation of *Being and Time* in 1927. Wulf ventures the hypothesis that these passages are written before *Being and Time*, especially because Stein interprets them differently but doesn't mention Heidegger as counterpart, and that it is possible that Stein's personal contact with Heidegger in those years had provided the chance to broach these themes in philosophical discussions.

Nature, Freedom, Grace represents a very important link between Stein's early phenomenological works, where the human being is a

³⁴ *Natur, Freiheit, Gnade* was mistakenly edited in vol. IV of ESW with the title *Die ontische Struktur der Person und ihre Erkenntnistheoretische Problematik*. For a complete explanation see Claudia Mariele Wulf, "Rekonstruktion und Neudatierung einiger früher Werke Edith Steins", in *Edith Stein, Themen – Bezüge – Dokumente*, Würzburg 2003, pp. 249 – 268.

psychological object, and her writings after her conversion, where the tone is still scientific but the analysis opens up to 'other' categories, for example the analysis of the religious experience. In this work Stein identifies three forces that interact in human life, namely 1) natural instincts and impulses, 2) free decisions and free will and 3) the power of divine grace. Each of these forces acts like a force of motion and moves, pulls or pushes the soul of the person (intended as the core, the inner centre) provoking its reaction. All movements of the human soul, such as love, hate, shock or surprise, wishing and wanting, are nothing more than the visible reaction of the soul to the outside forces. Such reactions can be of two different types: 'not-free' reactions are the sign of a passive soul, a soul that has not yet found its centre and is unbalanced, leading the human being to an 'animal' life, where it reacts to the pushes and pulls of the external world in a mechanical, sentient, naive way, without any deep process of reasoning. The 'free' reactions are the response of a free soul, a soul that, in Stein's words "has been freed from the world" thanks to two points of anchoring, in the inner centre (this expression is from Stein) and above.

We must here appreciate the visual aspects of this image: Stein does not preach here of a life of pure ascetics, as body and soul form an indissoluble unity and one cannot work without the other. The influences of behavioural psychology and the importance of a motivational pulse appear evident, rendering Stein's picture of the human being as distant from a Cartesian 'pure' ego as possible. However the person is called to a higher 'spiritual' way of living, where it must put order into the soul, carefully sort

out its emotions, welcome them or discard them, in a process of freely accepting and receiving. Freedom and reason are the two fundamental elements of this structure. Traces of this structure of the human soul are to be found in *Finite and Eternal Being*, with a more defined and significant role. This provides further evidence that Stein's early investigations build a homogenous body of work and provide the necessary support for her mature research.

Nevertheless one question immediately arises: is allowing what Stein calls 'an inner centre' to guide the process of sorting emotions actually an abdication of personal freedom? Stein's answer is that in order to let this centre guide the reaction, the person must already be free. This means that personal freedom must be given up, in order to allow for being to be freed from itself. Blind freedom of choice can only lead to chaos. To continue with the figurative speech: the infinite possibility of moving in all directions leaves the subject ultimately immobile, because it can't choose where to go. It is interesting to compare this image with Stein's study on empathy where she describes how the human body has a 'point zero' of orientation in a universe of other subjects: "I can approach and withdraw from any other thing, can turn toward or away from it. [...] this one object (my physical body) is given to me in successive appearances only variable within very narrow limits". (Stein, 1989, p. 41).

Stein describes in *Nature, Freedom, Grace* how the human being is able to move freely and must first of all give up his freedom, at least to some extent. This point is emphasised strongly and becomes increasingly

important in Stein's later works: true personal freedom is revealed in the act of self-giving, where to give up freedom is also the ultimate confirmation of it³⁵. The human being must originally and structurally be a *free* being, one that can take control of its freedom and – paradoxically – give it up.

If we consider one last time the spatial example, freedom is not meant as a 'free from' something, a pulling away, but more as a 'free for', a movement that drags the subject away from itself *towards* something else. The possibility of 'disposing' of oneself and 'giving' away oneself must be understood in a positive, pro-active sense, and not as a sacrifice or overthrow. Stein portrays a description of human life that is full, positive and that has meaning and depth. This perspective will acquire an ontological aspect that opens up to both finitude and eternity as constitutive parts of the human person. It is essential to stress that at this point Stein operates from a strictly philosophical (and phenomenological) perspective, and poses legitimate questions for a solidly based theory of being.

It is still necessary to briefly discuss the role of Max Scheler and the influence that his work had on Edith Stein. Without taking part in the debate on Scheler's claimed autonomy in the discovery and elaboration of the phenomenological method (towards Husserl), there is no doubt that his work and personality had a great influence on the phenomenological circle in Göttingen and even greater influence on the Catholic academic community of his time. Stein first met him when his work *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (Scheler, 1913), published in the

³⁵ "Die Selbsthingabe ist die freieste Tat der Freiheit", ESW VI, p. 156.

phenomenological yearbook (of which Scheler is the co-founder) was chosen as a selected reading for the Göttingen seminar in 1913. Later she read his work on *The Nature of Sympathy* (Scheler, 1954) and compared Scheler's take on empathy with Husserl's in her dissertation.

The major element that Stein gained from Scheler's view was the idea that the world offers itself in its 'givenness' to the person that has the ability to see it, that is open to receive its wonder. Phenomenology is first and foremost an act of love and wondering admiration, a spiritual attitude to encounter the other person and the world around us. Scheler trusted the power of the intuition of essences, and Stein describes him, in fact, as the most radical of all phenomenologists with respect to his remarks against a critical analysis as a fundamental spiritual attitude (ESW VI, p. 11). Stein re-elaborates Scheler's theory of values, by insisting that our responses to situations and feelings are not the result of a cause-effect chain but they are *motivated* by the intrinsic value of the objects we encounter. This also causes personal acts to be categorized according to the inner feelings that motivate them: the act of a person would not be the same if another person does it (Sawicki, 1997, p. 41). This highlights the uniqueness of the character that denotes personal being.

Finally, Stein found in Scheler a differentiation of the levels of personhood that she would then further research and that provided the basis for her own theory of the person: Scheler not only distinguished between the sensible, the psychic and the spiritual levels, but he further separated the psychic level into the areas that deals with perceptions

(psychic/vital) and the areas that elaborate meaning and logical thinking (the 'soul', which translates the German '*Seele/seelish*'): "what goes on at the lower levels can be scientifically "explained", while activities at the upper level can only be "understood"" (p. 36). This separation resulted in a progression where Stein was able to overcome Husserl's theory and theorise the experience of something that cannot be confined to the categories of spiritual intentional acts.

2.5. Modern thinking, Neo-Scholasticism and religious conversions

When Martin Heidegger spoke in front of the Heidelberg Academy of Science in 1957 he declared that the time between 1910 and 1914 was impossible to describe with words, and could only be explained with the help of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Dostojewskij, Hegel and Schelling, Rilke and Trakl, Dilthey (Pöggler, 1999, p. 160). All these authors had hoped that war would be a return of the great ideals and an occasion for dramatic change and new beginnings. On the verge of the Great War the young generation of academics and intellectuals in Germany, like in the rest of Europe, experienced a rebirth of idealism and a newly discovered sense of patriotism. Many of them volunteered to fight for their country and many felt deeply that they should do something for the war effort. Many women, including Edith Stein, trained as nurses and worked in military hospitals. Stein described in her autobiography the emotional climate of that period and the reasons that brought her to put her studies on hold. Witnessing the

sacrifice of her male companions, who had left university to fight for their country, had made it 'impossible (for her) to have a personal life'.

For this young generation in Germany losing the war was a bitter experience: survivors found themselves not only in pain and in mourning, but also spiritually disillusioned and confused. If on one side the experience of war led to various cultural movements that rejected its premises, such as widespread anti-modernism and anti-patriotism, on the other side, Germany experienced an even greater revival of the nationalist spirit, accompanied by mistrust towards political dissolution, capitalism, along with the growing need to re-establish a strong national identity³⁶. Caught between these two viewpoints former students and young academics suddenly discovered death, enemies, poverty, the loss of jobs and social security, and had to rebuild a new life and a new collective conscience³⁷. For Stein the death of Adolf Reinach in 1917, her talented and promising teacher and mentor within the phenomenological circle, is only one example of the irrationality of war and of death itself. Many ceased to believe in their former values and ideals and developed a sense of anger and injustice. They questioned and rejected their cultural inheritance from the previous generation and felt the urge to confront their political and religious beliefs. It was hoped that the longed-for reconstruction would come: a reconstruction of personal consciousness along with a new way to consider life itself, after chaos and

³⁶ See the brilliant analysis of Gerl-Falkovitz of Germany's spiritual evolution between WWI and WWII and the effect on Edith Stein (Gerl-Falkovitz, 2003, p. 149 – 161).

³⁷ The crisis of political belief and the need to rethink the world generated cultural reaction and philosophical changes. Gerl-Falkovitz shows that there is a new renewed interest for the relation between the human being, temporality and infinity. Amongst Stein's, Heidegger's and Husserl's main works, further examples are Max Scheler's *On the Eternal in Man* (1921) and Romano Guardini's *Welt und Person* (lessons between 1933 - 1939).

confusion. It is not a coincidence that two major philosophical works were developed during this time: in 1927 *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger followed by *Cartesian Meditations* by Edmund Husserl a year later. Both works were an attempt to redefine the position of the human being in the world, between knowledge, existence and temporality.

Alongside the cultural reaction and the social distress, another, more hidden, phenomenon begins to define itself: this is the religious movement that started in Germany during this time and brought many to a frank confrontation with their beliefs and in many cases to religious conversions (Gerl-Falkovitz, 2003, p. 151). ‘The Church awakes inside the souls’, with these words of Romano Guardini the Jesuit philosopher of religion Erich Przywara³⁸ describes in his work *Ringe der Gegenwart* the prevalence of religious movements, particularly Catholic movements, at the end of the 1920s (Przywara, 1929, p. 3 and p. 48). This description is essential to the accurate portrayal of the academic, intellectual and spiritual setting in which both Stein and Heidegger developed their early works and their personal goals. Przywara belonged to the group called ‘Southern German Scholars’ which also included Romano Guardini and Karl Adam. All of them contributed to the Jesuit magazine *Stimmen der Zeit* and were actively participating in the philosophical and theological debate of this time. Przywara also had a keen interest in the relationship between philosophy and theology and engaged in an evaluation of existential philosophy; in fact

³⁸ Erich Przywara had been a mentor for Stein, who was deeply impressed by his work on *Analogue entis*, which she quotes as one of the sources for her philosophical ontology. Heidegger, who was brought up and educated for the priesthood and joined – briefly – the Jesuit order, was also acquainted with him.

he was extremely open to discussion with philosophers of different schools and with non-Catholics, and attempted a deeply critical and innovative evaluation and reformulation of Catholicism, also benefitting from academic debates in the Jesuit tradition. In particular he investigated the path from Augustine and Thomas Aquinas to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the writing of John Henry Newman. Later on, Stein would embark on a long search for a methodological 'third way' out of the traditional polarity between a critical philosophical method and a positive faith, highlighting the role of modern theology and phenomenology in reviving scholasticism. The challenging topic of these academic discussions was represented by the opposition between the Gospel and real life, or, in the words of Romano Guardini, the primary role of the *logos* on the *ethos*.

Przywara identifies how the different movements of his time were deeply interconnected, in particular phenomenology and the liturgical movement³⁹. Phenomenology was seen and interpreted as a new scholastic philosophy: the renewed interest in Thomas Aquinas meant *in primis* an overcoming of the Cartesian-Kantian focus for the cognitive subject is overcome by a new triple will: the will for the object, the will for the essence and the will for God (Gerl-Falkovitz, 2003, p. 155). Stein understood philosophical investigation as a mutual effort, 'walking a road that many before have walked on', and therefore considered it not only legitimate but necessary to use the work of others before her and to build upon it, to open a dialogue between the past and the present, and to aid in the search for

³⁹ 'Phenomenology awakes the deepest roots of the religious spirit' (Przywara, 1929, p. 3).

universal truth. It is in this light that her work on a comparison of Husserl's and Aquinas' philosophy, later published in Husserl's *JPPF* on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, attempts to 'build bridges' between different methods and the way they search for truth. Stein highlights many shared aspects, not only in the proceeding methods but also in their results, i.e. the fact that both Husserl and Aquinas base their system on ratio, a natural / *super*-natural reason, or that, for both, faith can be the path that leads to the truth, and their understanding of philosophy as practice, or again how Husserl's analysis of the essence is to be understood as a renewed *philosophia perennis*.

Neo-Scholasticism was a revival of medieval scholastic philosophy and theology, which began in the second half of the 19th century and included several German philosophers and thinkers. Stein is rightly associated with this group in terms of research topics, although her specific orientation was the result of her own personal development. According to Stein, the modern interpretation of Scholasticism does not see any conflict between knowledge and faith: in fact the interpretation of modern times and problems in the light of Aquinas becomes the intellectual *modus operandi* of Thomism's attitude to Modernism. Modern theologians aim to restore the methods and the traditions of the 'old school' while maintaining their personal orientation, which is grounded on faith. Major areas of research include metaphysics, natural philosophy and psychology, particularly the nature of the universe and the position of the human being in it, the structure of the

human being seen as a unit of body and soul, the relationship between knowledge and faith.

The second element that Przywara brings to light is the overwhelming effect of the religious movements of these years⁴⁰ particularly the so-called academic movement. This attempted to discuss the structure of the Church and its relationship with society, particularly analysing the direction that contemporary Christian philosophy was taking. This new-found interest in religious matters and personal beliefs, along with debates between religious and secular philosophical approaches, was furnishing novel perspectives in the philosophy of religion. Catholicism, in particular, was portrayed as positive and as a valuable creative factor for general spiritual life.

Another visible sign of what will become known as the 'Catholic Spring' are the numerous conversions to Catholicism. Particularly amongst the young academics in Germany, conversions show a sudden increase during and after World War One. The phenomenological movement listed a high number of students who came to the Protestant and Catholic faiths, most likely because phenomenology has the potential to open up to the object of one's perception in a prejudice-free manner. Amongst the Catholics are Dietrich von Hildebrand, Max Scheler, Adolf Reinach and his wife Anna, whose conversion after the death of her husband was one of the first visible signs of faith and trust in God that started Stein's own conversion process. Heidegger's way 'out of the system of Catholicism', which will be presented

⁴⁰ The Benedictine Archabbey of Beuron in Baden-Württemberg represented for many in the phenomenological circle (amongst these Stein, Scheler, Heidegger) a religious retreat as well as an artistic and inspirational centre of interest.

in depth in later in this work, is also an example of how the search for a philosophical method affects personal beliefs, in his case making impossible the coexistence of both: if Stein's choice is to live as a Catholic and to address in her philosophical investigation matters that are close to her life (religious beliefs, the personal role in the community and the responsibility for the future of society, the human participation in eternal life and the structure of the spiritual experience), it is the general opinion that Heidegger maintains a strong separation between his life and his work, personal beliefs and philosophical research.

This theory, often used to attempt to justify Heidegger's political collaboration with the national socialist party, is strongly rejected by the English philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre: "The history of Heidegger's philosophical development is one thing, so these apologists say, the history of his political commitments and activities quite another. [...] But in fact the story of this division within Heidegger is a piece of mythology, mythology that enables those who teach Heidegger's philosophy in the classrooms of today to domesticate it and render it innocuous" (MacIntyre, 2006, p. 5). Although it would be wrong to accept the theory of a complete separation between Heidegger's life and work, and it is true that the matter of his political engagement as well as his religious position has roots and deep consequences for his philosophy, it is impossible to judge the entirety of his thoughts as a consequence of life events. Without entering into the matter of

Heidegger's post-war declarations to explain his actions⁴¹ I must focus on the much-debated matter of Heidegger's religiosity.

To what extent is phenomenology responsible for the spiritual breakthroughs of these authors? Part of the method provides a transition from the natural attitude to the transcendental attitude and the purification of all worldly elements to prioritize the inner side. It is possible therefore to see similarities with many elements of religious spirituality: self-transcendence, mysticism, and purification from the world. In fact many phenomenologists have researched the structure of the religious experience (Adolf Reinach's work on phenomenology of religious experience is an example⁴²).

Edith Stein had highlighted the similarities between Thomism and phenomenology in her essays for the *JPPF*, and she saw clearly – with Aquinas, but more clearly than him - the limits of human reason (natural reason). She believed in the possibility of collaborative work between the analytical sciences and discussions concerning doctrines of faith. As she would make clear in the preface to *Finite and Eternal Being* she was interested in the search for truth as a doctrine of being and not as a philosophical system. Such an investigation does not presuppose barriers or require 'bracketing'. It is because of the exclusion of the world that Husserl's natural reasoning, his transcendental phenomenology, cannot reach the

⁴¹See the previously discussed matter of Heidegger's dealings with criticism in Introduction 1.4.

⁴² See Beate Beckmann, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Erlebnis. Religionsphilosophische Überlegungen im Anschluss an Adolph Reinach und Edith Stein*, Königshausen und Neumann, Würzburg 2003.

domain that surpasses human subjectivity and stays instead within the limits of human experience. By excluding all assumptions on the existence of external objects, Husserl gradually focused only on the structure of consciousness and on the constitutions of objects in pure consciousness. This appears to be a return to idealisms; especially because the phenomenological attitude had characterised a psychophysical subject *in the world*, structurally open to other subjects, values, experiences, ideas and feelings. This focus on a self-constituting subject unbalances the relationship between the act of consciousness and the phenomena, in favour of consciousness. This is also why many of Husserl's early scholars defined themselves as 'realist phenomenologists' and defended a research approach that preceded the publications of *Ideas*, where Husserl takes his turn towards transcendental reduction. On the other side Aquinas – so Stein – “never advocates bracketing the existence of the world. He is not interested in analysing possible worlds; rather, his philosophy searches for ‘the most complete image of *this* world’” (Stein, 1929, p. 338).

Stein first encounters the world of faith during her research years in Göttingen. She firstly describes her new awareness with the words of phenomenology: “The bars of the rationalist prejudices I had unconsciously grown up with collapsed, and there, standing in front of me, was the world of faith. I could see that among the inhabitants were people whom I admired, people whom I worked with on a day-to-day basis” (ESGA 1, p. 211). Stein highlights the necessary capacity of observing the world without preconception, which guided her to the evidence of belief. Later, when she

worked alongside Husserl and the time immediately after, she suffered a long personal crisis, highlighted also by the failing of a romantic relationship, the difficulties of establishing herself professionally in a male dominated academic world and the instability of the political situation in Germany: all these elements move Stein to search for an answer, which she finds in faith.

Her intellectual and personal path is representative of the tension between modern religiosity, the academic world and the development of the new-Scholastic philosophy, and all of these elements were very much present at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Freiburg where the young Martin Heidegger enrolled in 1909 to study theology.

2.6. Martin Heidegger's philosophical beginnings

Stein's first encounter with Heidegger was in the summer of 1916 in Freiburg at Husserl's home: she had a positive impression of him and recalls how "he was quiet and introverted as long as no one discussed philosophy" in which case he would become "full of life". (ESGA 1, p.339)

Heidegger had begun teaching at the university of Freiburg after defending his habilitation work on *Duns Scotus's Doctrine of Categories and Meaning* (Heidegger, 1916) in 1915 and he occasionally joined Husserl's circle. Up to this point Heidegger, who had initially moved to Freiburg to become a Jesuit and had successively left the seminary and switched to studying philosophy, knew Husserl mainly for his *Logical Investigations*

(Husserl, 1901), which had impressed him deeply. In the following years Heidegger's personal and philosophical convictions would shift drastically from a Catholic faith and Christian-oriented theology to a new undogmatic religiosity and a scientific independent research towards the foundation of phenomenology and epistemology. At the same time, his personal and professional connection with Husserl grew stronger up to the point where Husserl designated him as his phenomenological 'successor' (a famous anecdote reported on how Husserl, in the early 1920s, declared "Phenomenology: that's Heidegger and I – and no one else!" (Kisiel, 1993, p. 59). The matter of Heidegger's phenomenology, and even more the reasons for his religious-philosophical conversion are essential to understanding his drive for a new foundation of philosophy, which lead to his most important work - *Being and Time* – being published in 1927.

Unusually Heidegger did not publish any work between his dissertation on Duns Scotus and *Being and Time*, even after his appointment as associate professor in Marburg in 1923. He, instead, devoted his time to lectures and further study. The publication of *Being and Time* is therefore preceded by more than ten years of intellectual clarification of his philosophical orientation, his strong break with religion, his lectures on phenomenology and his interpretations of Aristotle, Plato, Aquinas, Kant, and Leibniz. Biographers regard this long period as a time of personal crisis that determined the foundation of his philosophical method as well as the consolidation of his growing fame. In the words of his former student Hannah Arendt "Heidegger's 'fame' pre-dated by about eight years the

publication of *Sein und Zeit* in 1927” and the success that followed the book started with his first lecture courses and seminars in 1919, in fact:

“there was nothing tangible on which his fame could have been based, nothing written, save for notes taken at his lectures, which circulated among students everywhere. These lectures dealt with texts that were generally familiar; they contained no doctrine that could have been learned, reproduced, and handed on. There was hardly more than a name, but the name travelled all over Germany like the rumour of the hidden king” (Arendt, 1971)⁴³.

Heidegger’s early education had been supported by Catholic scholarships and it was not a coincidence that his first choice had been to join the Jesuit order, which at that time was considered to be strongly traditional and critical towards modern influences. His decision was an indication that he was not aspiring to work ‘in the world’, by becoming a parish priest or a schoolteacher, but he was more inclined to become a religious author or an academic.

In 1911, after only four semesters at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger gave up his training for the priesthood and the study of theology to transfer into philosophy. He would explain later in his career that his theological studies were ‘dissolved’ by studying philosophy, humanities and the natural sciences (Schaber, 2004, p. 84). The shift to a philosophical orientation and the need for a research prospective free of prejudices drove Heidegger to what would later be called his ‘spiritual break’ with the

⁴³ Traslated from German by Albert Hofstadter, online source:
<<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1971/oct/21/martin-heidegger-at-eighty>>.

Catholic faith. In a letter that he wrote in January 1919 to the Freiburg theologian, Engelbert Krebs, he explained:

“The last two years, which I have devoted to finding a principal clarification of my philosophical position, laying aside any non-philosophical commitment, have brought me to such results. If I was finding myself in any commitment outside of philosophy, I could not have assured the freedom of conviction and of teaching that made these results possible. Logical theoretical insights trespassing the theory of historical knowledge, have made the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable for me – however not Christendom and metaphysic, these however seen in a new light” (Casper, 1980, p. 541).

Heidegger was deeply interested in the phenomenon of religion and religious experiences and read with interest the works of Schleiermacher and Hegel. His ‘modernist’ attitude contrasted strongly with the general Catholic compliance with the papal directive that was encouraging Catholic academics to remain in line with the Thomistic approach. As a student of theology he studied extensively the Scholastic and Christian metaphysics and was familiar with the works of Aristotle, Aquinas, Plato, Augustine, Duns Scotus, Eckhart and medieval mystics, Neo-Kantianism and Neo-Thomism as well as with the New Testament and the writings of the Church Fathers. Heidegger was attracted particularly by the concept of an early ‘primitive’ Christianity, and its idea of an uncontaminated, positive and natural religiosity.

Among the philosophical books that Heidegger took an interest in, there were the two parts of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, which were published in 1900 and 1901. He was also fascinated by the cognitive possibilities of logic and mathematics and decided to study the works of

Heinrich Rickert and Heinrich Finke. After switching to philosophy, his theoretical interests became more substantial and he attempted a critic of Catholicism as a system, showing how it was lacking a real freedom of investigation and a scientific ideal. The choice of topics for his early articles and essays before 1913 demonstrated a wide ranging analysis of Catholic doctrine compared to some of the most contemporary movements of this time: liberalism, Darwinism, modernism and subjectivism.

The search for truth, intrinsic to his religious education, would then express itself in the systematic methodologies of mathematics and philosophy, particularly in the phenomenological method. His research interests lay in the 'facticity' of life: life is 'here and now' and cannot be understood according to the traditional body-soul distinction. This intuition became even more acute after his encounter with Edmund Husserl and the phenomenological method, which planted the early seeds of a scientific foundation, a free research method that is only guided by its search for truth.

Until this time Heidegger was considered by Husserl to be mainly a 'Catholic' philosopher, whose 'appropriate religious affiliations' made it possible for his name to be proposed for the chair of Catholic philosophy, although he was ultimately rejected, much to his surprise. After the tragic fall of Adolf Reinach at the front in 1917, Husserl started considering Heidegger as his "most valuable philosophical co-worker", also on the basis of his newly acquired freedom from "dogmatic Catholicism", which allowed him to "cut himself off (from) the sure and easy career of a 'philosopher of

the Catholic worldview” (Kisiel, 1993, p. 75). Much speculation had been made as to whether the founder of phenomenology played a role in Heidegger’s religious break, to which Husserl himself felt the need to clarify in a letter to Otto written in 1919 “I have not exercised the least bit of influence on Heidegger’s and Ochsner’s [his other ‘religiously oriented’ student] moves over to the ground of Protestantism, although I can only take great satisfaction in them as an ‘undogmatic Protestant’ and a free Christian” (Kisiel, 1993, p. 75).

When, in 1918, Stein left her position with Husserl, exhausted by the challenging work that wasn’t leaving her enough room for personal research, her position was offered to the young Heidegger, who had completed his *habilitation* thesis three years earlier. The journeys of these two philosophers separated: Stein’s new found meaning in life resulted in 1921 in her decision to become a catholic. In this time she started reading Christian authors, translated Thomas Aquina’s *Questiones de Veritate* into German, and wrote about the role of women in the Church along with keeping in touch with the other ex-members of the phenomenological circle. It is interesting to note how the progression from phenomenology to Scholasticism did not represent an obstacle in Stein’s projects, but is in fact a coherent choice. In fact Stein’s first attempt to write about ontology was a dissertation on the ideas of potentiality and actuality and *Finite and Eternal Being* (which she started as a revision of that work) was also intended as an attempt to build a bridge between Thomas and Husserl. Her decision to discuss Heidegger’s philosophy of existence, and to demonstrate the

consequences of following this philosophical trail, were a part of this project, as explained by Lebech:

“Stein needed to testify to the effect that phenomenology could have been taken in a direction different from Heidegger’s and that Heidegger’s influence on the direction it took in the minds of many of those, who popularised the movement left it truncated in the same way she thought Heidegger’s thought was. This is one reason to write about Heidegger. Another reason to write about Heidegger is that he had written about being in a manner characteristically different from hers, and that the analysis of his thought allowed her to explain why she had not chosen to work along the same lines as he. These two reasons amount to the same one if Stein conceived her latter work to continue the phenomenological tradition in a direction alternative to Heidegger’s. Perhaps she did.” (Lebech, quoted from draft paper, to be published with ICS Publications).

After starting work with Husserl, Heidegger gained enormous popularity. His main area of interest was phenomenology of religion, and specifically he investigated the history of the Christian tradition and its ties with the scientific and theoretical world. His courses of this period addressed the relationship between real life and scientific attitude, more specifically the phenomenological method enhanced Heidegger’s idea that philosophy needed a strong scientific consciousness to return to the genuine origins of intellectual life. Heidegger however, saw the phenomenological attitude only as a starting point towards understanding the ‘facticity’ of human life in the world. In his lecture of 1919/20 on *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he remarked on how philosophy is essentially ontological: not only philosophy deals with the ultimate questions of life itself, such as the definition of nature, soul, freedom, but it also reflects on the ultimate meaning of knowledge and reason itself: “what can I know? What should I do? What is man?” (what Heidegger calls philosophy in a cosmic sense) and

must, therefore, aim to the understanding of being: "Philosophy is the theoretical conceptual interpretation of being, of being's structure and its possibilities. Philosophy is ontological. In contrast, a world-view is a positing knowledge of beings and a positing attitude towards beings; it is not ontological but ontical" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 8). Philosophy itself is tied with human existence and investigates its very structure and reason to be.

At this stage Heidegger is embracing the phenomenological method, although he doesn't recognise its originality. What the first stage of the phenomenological method, 'reduction', offers, is a prejudice free investigative attitude, that Heidegger simply described in his analysis as "leading one's vision back from the apprehension of a being ... to the understanding of the being of this being". What matters is to view the being as unconcealed, out of human life and the natural world that surrounds it. Heidegger stressed here that the role of phenomenology is only as the scientific method for ontology itself: "scientific method is never a technique. As soon as it becomes one it has fallen away from its own proper nature" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 21). In Heidegger's view phenomenology is merely a method and therefore cannot have a standpoint or pronounce any theses, but only describe and approach the object of research.

Along with Edith Stein, former members of Husserl's phenomenological circle used to keep a close eye on Heidegger and the philosophical faculty in Freiburg: they seemed to have had the impression that Husserl, who had complete trust in Heidegger, was in fact being misunderstood, while Heidegger was gaining the attention of the students

and progressing in a new direction of teaching that could not be more distant from Husserl's one. At the same time, however, none of them could remain oblivious to the incredible strength and originality of Heidegger's philosophy, and many decided to analyse his works in depth.⁴⁴

Stein declared *Being and Time* to be one of the most significant efforts ever made in her time to arrive at a foundation for metaphysics. Heidegger's masterpiece first appeared in Husserl's yearbook (*JPPF*) in 1927 and immediately put Heidegger into a position of international, intellectual and academic visibility and respect. The creation of a personal philosophical terminology contributed to forming a difficult and tormented language, which is often the result of idiomatic words and of phrases in the German language, mostly because he struggled to find the appropriate name for new concepts in the conventional philosophical vocabulary, or – as others have put it – because his language “flees from history, yet without escaping it” (Adorno, 2007, p. 37)⁴⁵, meaning that he refused *a-priori* to acknowledge any influences from the historical philosophical tradition. While Stein found the natural completion to her philosophical training in the scholastic doctrine, Heidegger tried to deconstruct ancient ontology, and, in doing so, built the basis for an independent, prejudice-free, questioning of being.

In 1928 Heidegger replaced Husserl at the philosophical faculty and published *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*

⁴⁴ See Stein's letter to Roman Ingarden in ESGA 4, letter 78, 100, 101.

⁴⁵ This is a famous definition which was given by Theodor W. Adorno in the essay *Thesen über die Sprache des Philosophen*, written in the early 1930s (See Adorno, 2007).

(Husserl, 1928) consisting of Husserl's lectures, which had been meticulously reworked by Stein for two years while working as Husserl's assistant. Heidegger appeared as the editor for the volume and mentioned Stein's contribution in the foreword only regarding the transcription from shorthand to written text and proofreading. The previously mentioned final meeting between Stein and Heidegger took place in 1931 when Stein travelled back to Freiburg one last time to discuss the possibility of 'habilitation' work with her manuscript on *Act and Potency*.

Five years later, 1933, Heidegger was elected as rector of the University of Freiburg; in his short time as rector he did partially cooperate with the new regime after the election of Adolf Hitler to chancellor. In the same year, Stein, whose teaching activities were forbidden due to her Jewish origins, entered the Carmelite convent in Cologne as a postulant. Heidegger resigned his position as rector in April 1934.

2.7. Philosophy and theology: the 'square circle'

The struggle to reach an independent and intellectually honest research method and to establish himself as a un-dogmatic philosopher clarifies to some extent the content of Heidegger's previously quoted letter to Krebs: free research is only possible if one abandons the 'system of Catholicism', as a standpoint. In his lecture on the basic problems of phenomenology, Heidegger explained: "It has been said that my work is Catholic phenomenology – presumably because it is my conviction that

thinkers like Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus also understood something of philosophy, perhaps more than the moderns. But the concept of a Catholic phenomenology is even more absurd than the concept of a Protestant mathematics. Philosophy as science of beings is fundamentally distinct in method from any other science" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 20).

Furthermore, in a letter to Karl Löwith in summer 1921 Heidegger described how he understands basic philosophy as the study of human life, and therefore it must be intended as *vital* experience and an un-dogmatic prejudice free practise:

"To this facticity of mine belongs what I would in brief call the fact that I am a 'Christian theologian' [underscored in the original text]. This involves a particular radical personal concern, a particular radical scientificity, a strict objectivity *in the facticity*; [...] the motive and goal of philosophizing is for me never to add to the stock of objective truths, since the objectivity of philosophy, as I understand it and by which I factually proceed, is something proper to oneself. This however does not exclude the strictest objectivity of explication; that for me is implied in the very sense of my existence. [...] It is simply a matter of whether a purportedly impersonal stance accomplishes more than going after the things directly, where we *ourselves* must obviously *be involved* – otherwise there is no engagement. We are then objectively one-sided and dogmatic, but philosophically still 'absolutely' *objective and strict*. [...] We may be far apart in 'system', 'doctrine', or 'position', and yet *together* as only human beings can really be together: in existence." (Kisiel, 1993, p. 78).

A great help towards the understanding of Heidegger's key definition of the research areas of philosophy and theology and the problems raised by the connection of the two can be found in his lecture *Phenomenology and Theology*, which he delivered in March 1927 in Tübingen and repeated in Marburg in the following year with the

addition of a second part on “The positivity of Theology and its Relation to Phenomenology” (Heidegger and McNeill, 1998).

In this lecture he argued that theology as a positive science is not independent from philosophy, and he famously declared that the idea of a Christian philosophy is like ‘*Holzendes Eisen*’ (lit. wooden iron, which is a German expression to indicate a logical contradiction, e.g. in English a ‘square circle’), meaning that it represents a *contradictio in adjecto*.

Heidegger distinguished between two types of science: one that investigates the *Seienden* (the human being) and is called ‘ontic science’; the other that investigates *Sein* (being itself) which is an ontological science - philosophy. All real or just ‘possible’ sciences of the *Seienden* are therefore positive sciences, describing how things are and only caring for a specific type of *Seienden*, and to this extent they are structurally different from ontology. According to Heidegger’s theology, being a positive science, is “absolutely different from philosophy” and consequently much closer to other positive sciences, such as mathematics or chemistry, than to philosophy. However it must be recognised that philosophy and theology share a special connection, mostly because both relate to the same objects of investigation: human beings and more generally natural beings. This, however, does not change the fact that each science is based on a completely different principle: theology is based on faith, philosophy on reason. Faith is considered to be an *existential* of the human being, which does not derivate from it, but is revealed to it by the object of belief. In saying

this Heidegger is referring particularly to Christian theology, which he considers to be a positive science because his *positum* Christian-ness is disclosed by faith, not reason (p. 45). The scientific character of theology, however, needs the help of philosophy in order to grasp something conceptually that is 'essentially inconceivable': "something can very well be inconceivable and never primarily disclosable through reason without thereby excluding a conceptual grasp of itself. On the contrary: if its inconceivability as such is indeed to be disclosed properly, it can only be by way of the appropriate conceptual interpretation" (p. 50).

Heidegger wondered how one can understand the essential elements of belief (the what, essence, and how, the mode of being, of Christian-ness) through the positive evidence of the elements of faith. The act of belief has already been said to be a 'how', a mode of being (existential) of the human *Dasein*. In order to better clarify this, Heidegger compares the act of faith to a rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*) of the *Dasein*, intended as *modus* of the historical existence of a believing human being. He quotes Luther: "Faith is permitting ourselves to be seized by the things we do not see" (Werke, Vol 46). This stresses the role of human participation in the theological understanding of *Dasein*: "Thus faith understands itself only in believing. In any case, the believer does not come to know anything about his specific existence, for instance, by way of a theoretical confirmation of his inner experiences. Rather, he can only "believe" this possibility of existence as one which

the Dasein concerned does not independently master, in which it becomes a slave, is brought before God, and is thus born *again*" (p. 44). In the act of participation with a *Seinsmodus*, a permission to 'be seized' by faith and understand human life in its light, Heidegger sees a defeat of reason and freedom, a *Dasein* that does not gain any further understanding of its human condition and instead entrust its existential meaning to faith. In doing so the human being chooses to live in the modus of existence of belief, the believing existence, which is only one of many *modi*, types of possible existence, and this is what is investigated by theology. Philosophy on the other hand is concerned with "the free questioning of a purely self-reliant Dasein", above the theological positive science as well as any other science investigating a particular form of existence.

Philosophy is therefore somehow taken for granted by theology because it provides a basic understanding of being and as such serves an "ontological corrective" of the ontic and allows theology to function correctly. Despite this special relationship:

"*faith*, as a specific possibility of existence, is in its innermost core the mortal enemy of the *form of existence* that is an essential part of philosophy and that is factually ever-changing. Faith is so absolutely the mortal enemy that philosophy does not even begin to want in any way to do battle with it. This *existentiell opposition* between faithfulness and the free appropriation of one's whole Dasein is not first brought about by the sciences of theology and philosophy but is *prior* to them. Furthermore, it is precisely this *opposition* that must bear the *possibility of a community of the sciences* of theology and philosophy, if indeed they are to communicate in a genuine way, free from illusions and weak attempts at mediation. Accordingly, there is no such thing as a Christian philosophy; that is an absolute 'square circle'" (Heidegger and McNeill, 1998, p. 53).

2.8. The question of being in modern ontology

Stein was always interested in classical metaphysics, and she had previously searched for what she called a positive determination of metaphysics. In a letter to Conrad-Martius from Munster on 13th November 1932 (ESGA 2, p. 250) she explained that she understood metaphysics as a discipline based on both philosophy and theology, a discipline that has for its object the entire reality which results from the revealed truth. She also added that her perspective is the result of her studying the works of Aquinas.

This approach to the question of being is not a personal issue for Stein, but a philosophical question that is central to her time and therefore must be put into a wider context, a context that comprehends classical metaphysics. Both Stein and Heidegger tried in their works to solve one of philosophy's most ancient questions, the question of the meaning of being, and they in doing so walked backwards along the path that previous philosophers have walked before them, and analysed how they dealt with the same question. We have already seen how Stein found in the scholastic doctrine a natural completion to her philosophical training and how her first attempt to write about ontology was a dissertation on the ideas of potentiality and actuality, she was therefore attempting to build a bridge between Thomas and Husserl, while Heidegger tried to deconstruct ancient ontology, and built the basis for an independent, prejudice-free, questioning of being. Stein willingly placed herself into a philosophical tradition. She made her intentions clear regarding her research attitude in the preface of

Finite and Eternal Being: she wanted to pursue a search for truth, to produce an attempt that may help others, to draw a doctrine of being and not a philosophical system. Such an investigation does not presume barriers or alliances.

When Stein chose Heidegger as a counterpart for her tractate on the problem of being, she read and commented on four of Heidegger's works on this topic, all published between 1927 and 1929: *Being and Time*; *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*; *The Essence of Reasons*; *What is Metaphysics?* (Heidegger, 2010; 2004; 2004). Many of the criticisms posed by Stein to Heidegger in this short essay concern his methodological inconsistencies: she remarks many times on how the final aim of Heidegger's research is nothing more than to ask again the fundamental question of the meaning of being. But why is it that the question of being must be asked again, must be re-awoken at all costs, according to Heidegger? Why does Stein describe it as a necessary question?

The attempt to grasp the meaning of being has roots in the classical ontology of Plato, Aristotle, Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas. Heidegger describes being as what determines beings as beings, that in terms of which beings are already understood (see SZ, p. 24). As a concept it is the most general and self-evident, furthermore because of its particular nature of always 'being-present' and 'being-such', it was presupposed that it was impossible to define and that a definition was in fact not needed. However the impossibility to define it – as stated by Heidegger – does not elude the questioning of it, rather, it urges one to do so more than ever.

The entire history of ontology has this vague and yet self-evident understanding of being in the background, the most influential attempts in modern times being Descartes and Kant. Heidegger states that all ontology remains blind from its aim because it has not yet succeeded in its fundamental task, i.e. the clarification of being. The reason for this is attributed to the fact that the question of being was not asked in an appropriate manner.

In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he approaches the problem of being phenomenologically, with the reduction of the problem to the following four theses:

- Kant's thesis: Being is not a real predicate.
- Medieval ontology or Scholasticism, a thesis that is traced back to Aristotle: to the constitution of the being of a being there belong (a) 'whatness', essence (*Was-sein, essentia*), and (b) existence or extantness (*existentia, Vorandensein*).
- Modern ontology: The basic ways of being are the being of nature (*res extensa*) and the being of mind (*res cogitans*).
- The thesis of logic in the broadest sense: every being, regardless of its particular way of being, can be addressed and discussed by means of the "is". The being of the copula (predicative).

It is at this point that Heidegger shifts the main problem from the posing of the question, to the problem of *whom* such a question should be asked. As he states in the above lecture course, the problem of being cannot be adequately brought up if the question of the meaning of being in general is not answered first. This means that we cannot understand what 'being' is in itself if we first don't explain what it means.

Again Heidegger goes back to phenomenology and searches for 'something like being' that belongs to our experience, in that it reveals itself in the present as a form of being and contributes to our understanding of being. This is of course the human being, in its present state the human *Dasein*. In *Being and Time* it says that the very asking of this question is this entity's 'mode of being', and that 'this entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its being, we shall denote by the term *Dasein*' (SZ, p. 27), which literally is translated as 'being-there'. Furthermore *Dasein* is initially described as not a 'what' but a 'who', that being for whom the question of being is important, the being for whom being matters.

It is now possible to draw a first important conclusion, which is that Stein and Heidegger operated in a methodologically directly opposing manner: while Heidegger *restricts and concentrates* the entire ontological question of the meaning of being on the *Dasein*, the human being and his existence and facticity, Stein attempts to do the exact opposite, she places the problem of being in the widest philosophical perspective and therefore

enlarges the concept of the human being to embrace the entire ontological horizon.

Chapter 3. Understanding Being and Time

This chapter is an analysis of Stein's critique of Heidegger. I examine key passages of Stein's essay *Martin Heidegger's Philosophy of Existence*, along with passages of *Finite and Eternal Being*, in which she directly discusses Heidegger's *Being and Time*. I look at the key concepts behind Stein's critique, particularly Heidegger's refusal to use the concept of person and his reasons for doing so, the consequences that follow from the coincidence of being and existence for the definition of the human being in Heidegger's work and his position towards traditional Christian ontology as expressed in *Being and Time*. Heidegger's concept of *Geworfenheit* (being thrown) and Stein's idea of *Geborgenheit* (being held securely) are compared. I also look at their different approach to the existential condition of the human being in relation to temporality and everydayness and the role of death.

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3.1. The analysis of *Dasein*

In the appendix on Heidegger's philosophy of existence Stein analyses *Being and Time*, which first appeared in Husserl's Yearbook in 1927 along with three other writings that were published in the following years: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* published in 1929; *The Essence of Reasons*, published in the 1929 yearbook which was a special issue dedicated to Husserl's 70th birthday; and *What is Metaphysics*, Heidegger's inaugural lecture which he delivered to the combined faculties at the University of Freiburg in summer 1929. The majority of the essay, however, is dedicated to *Being and Time*, and the other three works are discussed only briefly at the end, mostly in relation to *Being and Time*. Stein clarifies, for example at the beginning of her analysis of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, that she is not setting herself up to investigate whether Heidegger's interpretation of Kant is truthful, she is only attempting to try and find further clarification of the questions raised in *Being and Time* (MHE, p. 484)⁴⁶.

The analysis of *Being and Time* is divided into two parts: the first one entitled "Outline of the Argument" offers a synthetic description of Heidegger's investigations and focuses on the analysis of *Dasein* and on the

⁴⁶ I have indicated in brackets the abbreviations of the original German titles (see also bibliographical note p. ii) as follows: *Endliches und Ewiges Sein*, transl. *Finite and Eternal Being* (hereafter referred to as EES); *Martin Heideggers Existentialphilosophie*, trans. *Martin Heidegger's Existential Philosophy* (hereafter MHE); *Sein und Zeit*, trans. *Being and Time* (hereafter SZ).

relationship between *Dasein* and temporality, where Stein discusses specifically Heidegger's 'being-towards-death'. In the second part, "Evaluation" she questions and criticises directly specific aspects of Heidegger's argument before offering her response to his perspective. Again the focus and the main interest is the understanding of *Dasein*. Stein asks: 1. What is *Dasein*?; 2. Is the analysis of *Dasein* accurate?; 3. Is this a sufficient foundation for posing the question of the meaning of being in an adequate manner?

It is difficult, of course, to view Heidegger's thoughts at this point in time without taking into account the later development of his philosophy. A good example of a late work that could offer a helpful contribution to this debate is without doubt Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" from 1949, where Heidegger returns to the issues of the essence of the human being and reiterates the occurrence of existence as 'thrownness' and rejects Sartre's statement that existence precedes essence as well as the Christian theological idea of existence as a realisation of essence⁴⁷. It is, however, interesting to note how Stein already raises some of these objections more than ten years earlier and highlights those aspects of Heidegger's investigation that need clarification in this short essay which she chooses to append to her major ontological work and that will now be considered in detail.

Stein's first remark, which is repeated many times, is how the primary and final aim of Heidegger's research is to raise anew the fundamental

⁴⁷ See Introduction 1.4 p. 14.

question of the meaning of being: “The goal of the entire work was nothing else but to ask the question of the meaning of being in an appropriate manner. *Is* thus the question with which the work rings out identical with this question that was put aside, or is a doubt expressed as to whether the way chosen was the right one?” (MHE, p. 69). Later Stein concludes that *Being and Time* is in fact a repetition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* because it attempts to found metaphysics anew. (MHE, p. 83).

The central point for Heidegger quickly becomes ‘whom’ the question of being should be asked to: he says that one must question that being to whose being the asking for the meaning of being, and a certain anticipatory (pre-ontological) understanding of being, belongs: “The very asking of this question is an entity’s mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about – namely, being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its being, we shall denote by the term ‘Dasein’” (SZ, p. 27) This is the first definition of *Dasein*, where Heidegger clarifies that the analysis of *Dasein* should be carried out in order to prepare for the quest for the meaning of being.

The expression da-sein (literally ‘to be there’) is often translated by ‘existence’ and it has been used before in the history of philosophy with this meaning. For Kant *Dasein* is used to indicate the existence of an entity. However Heidegger restricts this particular term to indicate only the human being and highlights continuously the terminological and grammatical origin of the name and why it has to be distinguished by the traditional term

‘existentia’, which should be reserved for other entities, called ‘present-at-hand.

In § 9 of ‘the Analysis of Dasein’ it is said: “The ‘essence’ [Wesen] of this entity lies in its ‘to be’ [Zu-sein]. Its Being-what-it-is [Was-sein] (*essentia*) must, so far as we can speak of it at all, be conceived in terms of its Being (*existentia*)” (SZ, p. 67)⁴⁸. However Heidegger recognised the difficulty of using the traditional term ‘existence’ to denote a being that is ontologically different from *Dasein*. Grammatically the essentiality of *Dasein* lies in its existence, as a coincidence of subject and predicate, so that “when we designate this entity with the term Dasein, we are expressing not its ‘what’ (as if it were a table, house, or tree) but its Being” (SZ, p. 67). This point will be further clarified while describing the classical definition of being. For the moment Heidegger concludes that “to avoid getting bewildered, we shall always use the interpretative expression ‘presence-at-hand’ for the term ‘existentia’, while the term ‘existence’ as a designation of being, will be allotted solely to *Dasein*”.

Stein rightly observes how Heidegger’s analytical process is ‘set up’ from the beginning in order to demonstrate its premise, namely that existence is the basic constitution of the *Dasein* and that the difference between *Dasein*-like and non-*Dasein*-like being has not actually been elucidated. Heidegger does speak about the forgetfulness of the ancient

⁴⁸ I follow here Lebech’s translation and avoid Macquarrie and Robinson capitalization of being as well as other capitalization in the English translation of the German words. I also chose to use the original expression *Dasein* instead of any proposed translation. For further alterations of original translation and bibliographical choices see Bibliographical notes p. ii.

ontology that had omitted to consider the being in itself (*Sein*) and only speaks about the different types of beings (*Seienden*). He also recognizes in the *Dasein* the human being, with privileged access to solve the question of being, but in spite of this he still concentrates his entire analysis on the *Dasein* rather than on the being itself. Primarily for this reason Stein wonders whether his analysis is sufficient foundation for posing the question of being in an adequate manner.

2.9. *Dasein* and being

At the beginning of *Being and Time* it states that every type of enquiry is a 'seeking' and it must be guided beforehand by what is sought (SZ, p. 25). In the case of the enquiry about being it must be considered that the meaning of being is already available to us in a given way, although Heidegger, paraphrasing Plato, has already described how being is the most universal concept: "an understanding of Being is already included in conceiving anything which one apprehends as an entity". The fact that the concept of being is universal doesn't make it clearer; in fact it is described as the 'darkest' concept of all and the most indefinable. It represents an 'enigma' especially because of its self-evidence, since even if we ask 'What is Being?' we postulate a general understanding of the 'is'; therefore Heidegger concludes that "the very fact that we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise this question again" (SZ, p. 23). Because of

its vague and imprecise nature it is necessary for Heidegger to avoid traditional theories or tracking back entities to other entities, and instead he must narrow down how being-on-his-own manifests itself. This is, in a way, a phenomenological approach, which proves that Heidegger applies, at least theoretically although in personal manner, a method that derives from the phenomenological reduction.

The definition of being as what-is (*ens*, *Seiendes*) is immediately rooted in its presence in the world: "Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves, in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in *Dasein*; in the 'there is'" (SZ, p. 26). Once the direction of the quest has been clarified, Heidegger reiterates the ontological and ontical priority of the question of being. It will suffice to say here that, according to Heidegger, only philosophy, and specifically ontology, possesses the necessary distance and objective scientific priority to understand being as what it really is.

Heidegger enumerates and describes the most significant results of the history of ontology to conclude that the meaning of being has been misunderstood. Particularly the ancient ontology of Plato and Aristotle has mistakenly identified being as 'present-at-hand' with 'being-as-such', while later the predominance of ancient-Christian anthropology has deformed the objectivity of the ontological quest because religious concepts always provide the necessary support behind any unexplained human notions, such

as soul or spirit, or the idea of a human being that reflects a higher perfect one (Genesis I: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness”).

This observation is especially important when considering how a cumulative definition of the human being, as consisting of more substances, soul plus body, is excluded by Heidegger in advance as a metaphysical prejudice. His strong opposition to a positive metaphysic is called by Stein an ‘anti-Christian feeling’, which allows for the assumption that Heidegger had maintained a critical attitude that could be connected to the reason behind his sudden break with Catholicism to favour the objectivity of his philosophy⁴⁹.

Stein criticises Heidegger’s break with the existing philosophical tradition also on a terminological level: in the preface of *Finite and Eternal Being*, after remarking on the great impact of Heidegger’s work and its significance for the debate on the problem of being which was dominating the philosophical scene, she raised concerns about the new language of *Being and Time*, which she considered to have not been completely understood, or at least not in its fundamental meaning and, most importantly, in its incompatibility with the already existing ontological discussion. Both these comments demonstrate how she intended to evaluate not only Heidegger’s results, but also the direction of his investigation in significant depth.

⁴⁹ See chapter 2.7, p. 64.

It is possible to ask if Heidegger's methodological 'honesty' should be seen as an extreme attempt to reduce the object of his investigation to its final part, faithful to the phenomenological reduction, or if instead, it favours the risk of defining the boundaries of the investigation in order to exclude certain undesirable conclusions, an analysis that is shutting out in advance what it doesn't want to consider.

According to Heidegger *Dasein* stands out from all other manner of beings as identified by other sciences because the understanding of being is the definitive characteristic of its being. In this way *Dasein* is 'ontically distinctive in that it is ontological'. This means that *Dasein* is 'in such a way that it has an understanding of being' (SZ, p. 32). Heidegger explains furthermore that:

"The kind of beings towards which *Dasein* can comport itself in one or another, and always does comport itself somehow, we call 'existence' [*Existenz*]. And because we cannot define *Dasein*'s essence by citing a 'what' of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter [*ein sachhaltiges Was*], and because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its being to be, and has it as its own, we have chosen to designate this entity as "*Dasein*", a term which is purely an expression of its being [*als reiner Seinsausdruck*]" (SZ, p. 32).

3.3. The rejection of personal connotations

In her outlining of Heidegger's position Stein tries to achieve a deeper understanding of *Dasein* and what is hidden behind it. The three main elements of the *Dasein*'s being that she extrapolated from Heidegger's investigations are:

- *Dasein's* being is in each case mine (i.e. is as such individual and not universal)
- It relates to itself
- Its being or its *existence* is also its *essence* (*Wesen*): what belongs to the structure of its being is designated as an 'existential'.

Dasein appears to be therefore completely locked in itself, in self-relation and self-determination. It lives in-the-world which is not understood in a spatial way, "with world is not understood the totality of all objects present-at-hand" and also not intended as its natural environment, but it is an existential of the *Dasein*, which means that being-in-the world belongs to its mode of being as such. The *Dasein* has the possibility of dealing with things, which is said to be the fundamental structure of its in-being, whereby things are only regarded as tools, as something that has a practical use.

Stein's wonders at this point if any 'personal' state of being can be attributed to the *Dasein*. In particular its state of being in the world should comprehend some sort of being-with-others, however it emerges that: "Being in the world is characterised by 'concern' [*Besorgen*] (in the many senses of 'enduring', 'achieving', 'obtaining', and 'being apprehensive'. Knowing is also a kind of concern. One falsifies its original character if one sees it as a relationship between present-at-hands (subject and object). It is a kind of in-being" (SZ, p. 58). The everydayness of the *Dasein* doesn't leave the space to form a relationship with the world around it, whether this may

be with objects or others. However it is unequivocal that the *Dasein* is in fact a subject, 'not a *what*, but a *who*' and as such is in the world with others. Such a relationship however has no personal connotation, but once again it merely belongs to the form of existence of the *Dasein*.

Heidegger doesn't deny that the *Dasein* is in fact the human being, but he states that its substance is not the spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; "it is rather *existence*" (MHE, p. 69). Its existence has the form of being-with other *Dasein*, which is a necessary existential of the *Dasein* for the purpose of understanding the world and others (not for knowledge as already clarified but as part of its primordial state of being-in-the-world). Stein concludes that: "*Dasein* is from the start *with-being-there-in-the-world*" (p. 69).

The absence of personal connotation of human being is one of the major points of discordance between Stein and Heidegger. Stein remarks on how the *Dasein* means the man, the human being to whom belongs the questioning about the sense of its being, however *Dasein* "'has' no possibilities as 'attributes', but 'is' its possibilities. Its proper being is its having-to-become-itself. As Inwood rightly observes it is not an exaggeration to say that *Dasein* involves no 'what' but consists wholly in its possibilities (Inwood, 1997, p. 24), which is why Heidegger chooses to speak in 'existentials' of the *Dasein* rather than 'categories', as it would be for any other entity.

Stein also remarks on the fact that the choice of the name *Dasein* for human beings is positively founded because it relates to a positive

understanding of human existence and generally of being-in-the-world, which is always 'directed' towards something. She would probably have hoped to see a substantial analysis of the circumstances and implications of human life in the world, among others, following this premise. Also she argues that Heidegger doesn't dispute that "the human being has a body, but nothing further is said about it" (MHE, p. 69). Neither is anything said of the soul, while Heidegger remarks that the spirit has priority and that the analysis of the *Dasein* should offer 'the clarity that until now no 'doctrine of the soul' has been able to" (p. 69). Although Stein is clearly not hoping for a materialistic interpretation, she concludes that the expressions "I", 'subject', 'soul', 'person', even 'human being' and 'life' are to be avoided".

Heidegger explains his rejection of an anthropological, psychological or biological understanding of *Dasein* in § 10 of *Being and Time*, where he also attacks Scheler's personalism and philosophy of life. This critique can shed a light on the reason behind the rejection of a personal terminology. After remarking that the analysis of the *Dasein* is superior to the phenomenological interpretation of personality and that 'no matter how much Husserl and Scheler may differ in their respective inquiries ... they are fully in agreement on the negative side of their interpretation of personality" (SZ, p. 73), he praises Scheler's description of the person as a unity of intentional acts bound together by a meaning. This precludes an understanding of the human person as a thing, a substance, a unity of body, soul and spirit, which are all traditional misunderstandings caused by Christian anthropology. However Scheler's interpretation is not free from

criticism since “psychical being has nothing to do with personal being. Acts get performed; the person is a performer of acts. (...) How is the kind of being which belongs to a person to be ascertained ontologically in a positive way?” (SZ, p. 73).

Stein cannot get away from a clear definition of the parts that compose the human being and it is immediately evident that she understands the human being in a much wider theoretical context: this is not only because, unlike Heidegger, Stein ties her analysis to a philosophical tradition, but also because she has worked for many years investigating the different aspects of human life and has now reached an well-rounded definition of human being, starting with the phenomenological investigation of the pure I (*reines Ich*) as immediately given in conscious experience and gradually moving to consider what constitutes the individual being and the structure of the person.

Stein also attempts to find a positive determination of what appears to be a not fully clarified and somewhat abstract concept of *Befindlichkeit* which Heidegger uses to describe the state-of-mind of the *Dasein*, its being-found-in-the-world (see 3.6 on the analysis of Heidegger’s ‘thrownness’). Stein comments: “*Befindlichkeit* seems particularly important to me in order to ascertain what is bodily and what is of the soul, and how these relate, but its full meaning cannot be completely clarified, if it is not seen in its unfolding as relating to the being of body and soul” (MHE, p. 70). For Stein, firstly, Heidegger’s refusal of bodily characterisation of the *Dasein* and

secondly, of the recognition of a psychical level of human being are not justified in the progression of its analysis.

It is also important to remember how *Finite and Eternal Being* represents the highest point of this 'ascension to the meaning of being', as in this work Stein not only presents her answer to the ontological question of the human being, but also investigates the relationship between the human and the divine being. In order to do so she applies the formula of the analogy of being (lat: *analogia entis*), which, according to Thomas Aquinas, allows one to know God through analogy with his creation: in this way the finite being is not simply extrapolated from the eternal one, likewise the idea of an eternal God is not reduced to His creation. The understanding of an eternal being is in fact described as an encounter with the personal being of God.

For Stein a personal being can positively determine its actions, therefore a human person is defined as free and conscious and encloses the totality of its parts: body, soul and spirit. Stein recognises how the concept of 'person' involves more than the phenomenological definition of pure ego and is ultimately a living, spiritual and personal I. She identifies the essence of the human being in life itself, defined as more than just existing: a body-soul fullness in the free and conscious mode of life, a lively personal relationship with the inner and outer spheres of oneself, with others and with God.

After considering these elements, particularly the centrality of the bodily, psychical and relational aspect of the human being, it is easy to see a defined separation between the analysis of these two authors: Edith Stein

had worked too deeply on the analysis of the person, from different points of view (sociological, psycho-physical, anthropological) to accept a definition of the human being that based itself purely on the evidence of its being 'there'. Such an investigation excludes, from the very beginning, other aspects that also contribute to the unity of what we can define as being, such as a living body (*Leib*) and soul (*Seele*). In order to fully grasp this point it will be necessary to answer two central questions: What is intended by the traditional definition of being 'that which is' and how does Stein reach this definition?

3.4. The separation of being and existence: Aquinas' way

Stein voices her concerns about the exclusion of the traditional duality of 'body and soul' in a very trenchant way:

"What is left of the human being, when it is abstracted from body and soul? That another quite large volume could be written about this is perhaps the best proof of the distinction of essence and existence in human beings. That Heidegger does not get away from this distinction, even when he denies it, is shown by the fact that he constantly speaks of the 'being of *Dasein*': something which would have no meaning if by '*Dasein*' was meant nothing else than the human kind of being" (MHE, p. 70).

The attempt to understand the being of *Dasein* in terms of reality and substantiality is for Heidegger a reversal of the order of being: as the understanding of being is something that belongs to *Dasein*, there is understanding of being only when *Dasein* is. For Heidegger what ultimately constitutes a human being, the essence of *Dasein*, is its existence, understood

as *Sorge* (care for its being). However while declaring that *Dasein* is its existence he cannot get completely away from the separation between essence and *Dasein*. Stein notices that speaking of the being of *Dasein* (*Sein des Daseins*) alone does not make sense if we refuse the traditional separation of essence and being. This is especially important when considering that, according to the *philosophia perennis* the coincidence of essence and being can be ascribed to God alone. By describing the essence of *Dasein* as his existence, in effect Heidegger makes the man a small God: he has no substance; on the contrary he is his existence.

In order to fully understand Stein's use of Aquinas it is necessary to briefly mention Aquinas' concepts as they are explained in the treatise *Being and Essence*, which analyses the different types of being, as they present themselves to the human intellect and to sense perception. Aquinas's differentiations proceed from the categories of being emphasised by Aristotle in the book Δ of *Metaphysics*. When it comes to define what the 'essence' of something is, for instance, what makes a human being a human being, Stein remarks on how the concept of essence in Aquinas is in fact very close to what Aristotle called substance (*ousia*) and what other authors have named in different ways ('form', 'nature'). What is meant here is what modern philosophy will call the 'quiddity', what makes something 'what it is'. Aquinas deals with the formal definition of being which translates the original Greek expression for the type of being that answers the question of 'what is it': "This is what the Philosopher (Aristotle) often calls that-which-

something-was-to-be, i. e. that to which something owes it that it is what it is”⁵⁰.

It is very important to proceed with caution regarding the disambiguation of the term. Being [*Sein, esse*] has a nominative form and a verbal form being as ‘what it is’, which is the present participle of the infinitive form [*Seiendes, ens*]. The latter can traditionally be attributed only to God, who *is* being, as *actus purus*, meaning that being is his essence (God declares “I am who I am”). It is in this regard that Heidegger attributes the full actuality of being to the human being in saying that *Dasein* is its existence, not as *Sein* but as its participle form. In fact there is no description of the structure of a form of an actual form of *Sein* outside *Dasein*.

In her ‘tenacious’ battle to fully grasp Aristotle’s ‘ousia’ Stein brings together her secure understanding of Aquinas’ doctrine of act and potency along with a clear aim to find a solid base for the constitution of beings. As she discovers in her analysis ‘form’ is often intended, in a general manner, to indicate ‘the stable element in a thing’. When one considers the traditional duality of ‘matter’ and ‘form’, matter is intended as an indeterminate that can only exist under some form in its actual way. Essence is not pure form, but the essence of something comprehends its matter *as well* as its form (“The *esse* of a composite substance belongs not to the form alone nor to the matter alone, but to the composite itself; and the essence is that in respect of which a thing is said to have *esse*”). ‘Quiddity’ relates to the terminological

⁵⁰ “*Hoc est etiam quod Philosophus frequenter nominat quod quid erat esse, id est hoc per quod aliquid habet esse quid*” (Chapter I. 31, see Aquinas, 1987, p. 6)

part of the definition, the link between essence and *esse* ('essence' is grammatically what-has-'esse', where *esse* is the infinitive form of the Latin verb to be, 'ens' is the present participle and 'essentia' the abstract noun). Finally Stein considers existence as opposite to what is merely intellectually conceived and follows Aristotle to distinguish between what can exist autonomously [*das Selbständige*] and what exists in dependency [*das Unselbstständige*] (EES, p. 175).

Stein regards the possibility of 'becoming': "The possible is not yet an existence in the full sense. But wherever there is a preliminary stage there must also be an ascent to a higher stage, and the passing from possibility to reality is becoming or, more precisely, this passing from one stage to the other pertains to becoming. For we have previously seen that becoming is truly a being lifted out of nothingness into existence" (p. 175). This remark is particularly interesting in view of Stein's criticism of Heidegger's idea of 'thrownness' into existence, which will be analysed in detail below.

In view of these preliminary observations is it possible to conclude that essence for Stein belongs to a natural unity but does not refer to a third party, a surplus added to the original matter and form relationship. Aquinas remarks for instance that the only essence we can find of a human being is its humanity. (2. 291) (Aquinas, 1987, p. 30). This means that essence is not necessarily something abstract, but the 'material' aspect of – for instance – the human being (its body) plays a role in the definition of it. However, for Aquinas there is an added difficulty: "In the definition of human being what occurs is indeterminate matter; for the definition of human being does not

contain this flesh and these bones, but flesh and bone in the abstract, which are the indeterminate matter of human beings" (2. 80) (p. 14).

It is now necessary to explore further Heidegger's definition of 'essence' and the consequences that its exclusion leads to.

3.5. Consequences of Heidegger's understanding of existence for the classical definition of being

Stein summarises the problems that arises from Heidegger's coincidence of essence and *Dasein* as follows:

"It can hardly be doubted that Heidegger wants to understand *Dasein* as the human kind of being. We could also say: human beings, as *Dasein* often is called 'a being' [*Seindes, ens*]⁵¹ without opposing the being [*Sein, esse*], as 'that which is' [*das, was ist, quod quid ist*], with being itself [*Sein, esse*]. It is also directly said that the essence of human beings is existence. That means nothing else than that something is claimed for human beings which according to the *philosophia perennis* is reserved for God: the identity of essence and being" (MHE, p. 69).

In *Finite and Eternal Being* Stein describes the human person as a 'carrier' of the essence. She underlines how what is alive, not only human but also animal and vegetative beings, has a living centre of its being, which ultimately is the centre of life itself. For the human being this vital centre takes the name of living soul. Her final goal is to define an ontology of the person, in which she overcomes the traditional Aristotelian separation of

⁵¹ In the English translation of MHE Lebech usefully avoids capitalisations and renders *Sein* with 'the being' and *Seiendes* with 'a being/beings'. Although I agree with this system, I have also indicated in brackets the original German and the Latin expressions to help with the most difficult terminologically distinctions.

form and matter with the triad of sentient body (*Leib*) – soul – spirit: ‘the form is then a living form or a soul ... Its being is life and life is a progressive forming of matter and therewith a progressive actualisation of the essence’ (EES, p. 275).

Within the discussion of form and essence, Stein explains how the essence of material objects cannot be explained in itself, but opens instead a connection to something else: what we call ‘alive’ is never finished, it is forever on the way to its own self. The soul contains the principle of forming itself, with Stein’s words *die Fülle des Seins*, which indicates the abundance of being. The fullness of the human being cannot be reduced to simply ‘being’ there; to explain this Stein chooses to use the term *Existenz*, the same that Heidegger has used in a general manner to indicate all entities other than *Dasein*. Stein uses it in a positive manner that reflects its traditional meaning, to explain what is added to the essence. In this way she is able to define a richer meaning of being: *Dasein* in the sense of real being is something more than essential being (not indeed something ‘higher’, but something *other* or *different*): “something that is ‘placed into *Dasein*, something whose real being has a temporal beginning. But *what* it is (its *quid*, understood as pure whatness, not as actual essence) prior to its realisation has no temporal beginning” (EES, p. 326).

It is necessary to emphasize how the three parts of the formal definition of being (according to Thomas Aquinas: ‘something that is’) are reduced by Heidegger to a duality; instead of the triad:

Being in existence (Seiende) essence Being itself (Sein);

- we have the duality:

existence (Dasein) Being itself (Sein).

Heidegger never really solves the problem of the relationship between the two parts, actually the being itself seems to become one with pure existence, and ultimately with time⁵².

In his lecture course of 1927, *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, Heidegger clarifies his position in relation to the traditional distinction between essential and existential: "The fact of this distinction between essential and existential has been well known since Aristotle and taken for granted as something self-evident. (...) In the description of the Kantian thesis we were told that existence belongs to God's essence, to the *essentia dei*. This is a proposition that Kant, too, does not dispute. What he contests is solely that human beings are in a position to posit absolutely a being such that existence belongs to its essence, that is, to perceive it immediately, in the broadest sense to intuit it. God is a being who, by its essence, cannot not be. The finite being, however, can also not be. This means that existence does not necessarily belong to what the finite being is, its *realitas*." (Heidegger, 1988, p 109).

⁵² I have explained this structure in my article *Sein, Wesen und Existenz bei Edith Stein und Martin Heidegger* (Ripamonti, 2006).

It is a legitimate question to ask if the existentials (the basic features of the *Dasein*) could be seen as a sort of substitute for what essence represents in the traditional ontological view. Stein solves the relationship between (human) existence and being with the middle term – the connection between both – represented by the living body and the soul. Proceeding from her initial assumption that the human person ‘carries’ its life and that this is what ‘makes the human being a human being’, she investigates the structure of the human soul in its natural and spiritual components. She concludes that temporal life belongs to the essence of the human being but that the human soul at its core also shares the fulfilment of eternity: “The person cannot live as a *pure ego*. It sustains its life out of that fullness of the essence [*Wesensfülle*] which is resplendent in the awakening of life, without ever being fully illumined or fully mastered. The person carries this fullness and is simultaneously carried or sustained by this dark and deep ground” (EES, p. 377).

Edith Stein’s approach aims to separate temporality and eternity as well as *Dasein* and being (*Sein*): the human being lives and needs the time for his relative fulfilment, but he will become complete only in eternity. Stein attempts to enlarge the borders of the human finitude to embrace the possibility of its ontological horizons. Heidegger does the exact opposite: he restricts and concentrates the entire ontological question on the *Dasein*, his existence and ultimately his finitude.

3.6. Human being and temporality

Edith Stein argues against Heidegger's concept of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) in the second chapter of her work *Finite and Eternal Being* where she compares Heidegger's *Dasein* to the *pure ego*. This is a concept that she borrows from Husserl's phenomenology and it helps her with her first steps into the investigation of the structure of the human being. Ego is the self as given in the immediate conscious experience, in other words the 'I' subject of any immediate human experience 'I perceive', 'I think', 'I wish', 'I experience joy'. It is not however a personal subject but an empty shell with no content of its own. The first question therefore is where is the content of the ego coming from? In the case of "I experience joy, for instance, the joy is said to originate *within* the ego, but not from the ego itself. The only certain content of the pure ego is that it is alive "the pure ego is alive in every experience and cannot be eliminated from it [the experience]", since the ego is not part of the content of the experience (i.e. joy) but rather "every experience is part of the pure ego; the pure ego is alive in every experience; its life is that very flux in which ever new structures of experiential units arise" (EES, p. 48). Stein concludes that life itself is the being [*Sein*] of the ego and this life is described as a continuous stream of living experiences and changing contents. This analysis is therefore within phenomenological territory (Stein describes the stream of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view). The ego therefore knows itself simultaneously as a living, actually present existence and as one that emerges from a past and lives further into a future.

The knowledge of the ego's existence in time is described as a factual one. In the same chapter, paragraph 2, Stein starts her enquiry explaining that "The Fact of Our Own Being" is an inescapable fact. Of the life of the ego 'here and now' as it emerges after the eidetic reduction there can be no doubt: "I may doubt whether the conclusions which I draw from certain premises are correct, but my syllogistic reasoning as such is an indubitable fact. And the same applies to all my desires and volitions, my dreams and hopes, my joys and griefs – to everything, in short, in which *I live and am*, to everything that manifests itself as part of the being of the self-conscious ego" (EES, p. 36). It is a primordial knowledge that Stein compares to the 'I live' in Augustine, the Cartesian *cogito* and the pure I of Husserl.

But how is the living I connected to temporality? It is worthwhile to quote this passage fully because of its importance for later investigations. In the same chapter it states:

"When I turn toward being as it is in itself, it reveals to me as a dual aspect: that of being and that of not-being. The 'I am' is unable to endure this dual perspective: that in which I am is subject to change and since being and the intellectual movement ("in which" I am) are not separated, this being is likewise subject to change. The "former" state of being is past and has given way to the "present" state of being. This means that the being of which I am conscious as mine is inseparable from temporality. An actual being – that is, as actually present being – it is without a temporal dimension [*punktuell*]: it is a now in between a "no longer" and a "not yet". But by its breaking apart in its flux into being and not-being, the idea of pure being is revealed to us. In pure being there is no longer any admixture of not-being, nor any "no longer" and "not yet". In short, pure being is not temporal but eternal." (EES, p. 37).

Stein has reached this point in her investigation with an independent use of the phenomenological reduction, however she makes heavy use of

Aquinas' doctrine of act-potency and of Pzywara's *analogia entis*. Eternal being is understood as pure actuality and pure fullness of being, where the "no longer" and "not yet" can be present. In this sense she reaches a different conclusion from Conrad-Martius's idea of actuality as a non-dimensional (pure) existence in her essay *Die Zeit* which Stein refers to while writing this passage. The hidden dialogue with Heidegger, although not quoted, is another source behind this section, as the following pages of *Finite and Eternal Being* demonstrate.

Pure actuality is for Stein eternal immutable being, as opposed to the temporal and mutable being of here and now. Through this relationship something of the eternal being can be revealed as an analogue though the temporal being, which is more than an image of it because it contains the possibility of potentiality: "my present being is simultaneously actual and potential being; and insofar as it is actual, it is the concrete realisation of a possibility which antecedes my present actuality" (EES, p. 39). Stein concludes that being is in need of time because of its 'always remaining a becoming'. However what is 'separated in human nature' is united only in the highest being, which is God (following Augustine's analysis), who is 'eternal and immutable', full actualisation of his being and 'his existence is his essence. He is who is, is' (EES, p. 41). The terminological critique of Heidegger, which was previously presented, can now be viewed in its full light.

Both authors have emphasized in their works the temporal aspect of my 'being aware': the undeniable evidence that I am being and how this

awareness of being is limited by temporality and characterised by its flowing aspects. Also because of this evidence it is apparent that the idea of temporal being opens the possibility of the idea of full unlimited being, as well as containing the possibility of not-being. This reveals itself not only by what is not anymore (past) but also by the eventuality of no-more-being (death). While Stein takes both elements into consideration, Heidegger only limits his analysis to temporal being and to not-being.

3.7. 'Being thrown' (*Geworfenheit*) or 'being secure' (*Geborgenheit*) in existence

Let's go back to Stein's description of the pure ego once she had clarified that the ego lives in the moment and life is its being. Life, however, does not belong to it, since the ego itself does not have any fullness or content, rather the ego receives it: "all its fullness derives from the experiential contents. The ego can experience present or past contents, such as a feeling relating to an experience that is now past but lives in the memory of the subject: does this mean that a long-gone joy is alive for the subject now? At what time is the ego really alive? Is it alive from one moment to the next? 'Has its being also had a beginning' or 'has the ego risen from nothingness?' (EES, p. 53).

Stein incorporates in this analysis her investigations into the problem of empathy (1916), with particular emphasis on the case of the present occurrence of a past experience. This example helped her reach the

conclusion that although a past content can be present ‘potentially’, the ego can only live in full actuality in the present. The joy that is felt can relate to a present or past experience but it originates from a place within, a “transcendent depth, which discloses itself in the conscious experience of joy,” (EES, p. 54). It is clear that the ego not only is not a source of life but also cannot originate or sustain itself in being through these contents of experience:

“The ego knows itself as a living, actually present existent and simultaneously as one that emerges from a past and lives into a future; itself and its being are inescapably there: it is a being thrown into existence [*ins Dasein geworfen*]. This, however, marks this being as the extreme opposite of an autonomous and intrinsically necessary being *a se* (by itself)”. (EES, p. 54).

This critical comment raises two important points: 1. How does Heidegger come to the image of the ‘throwness’ of the *Dasein*? and 2. What does this say about the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the *Dasein*?

Heidegger emphasizes the matter of *my* being in the fact of my being ‘there’: being-in-the-world is the basic state of being, and is *a priori*. Previously it was explained that this concept has nothing to do with spatiality and to further clarify this point Heidegger introduced gradually the complicated and crucial concept of *Befindlichkeit* of the *Dasein* (Macquarrie and Robinson translate this with the much-criticised expression ‘state-of-mind’, to better relate it to the concept of ‘*Stimmung*’, which is rendered with ‘mood’. Kisiel (2002) uses ‘Disposedness’ to better highlight the idea of ‘having-been-thrown’. I will use here the original

German): this is one of the three basic parameters of human existence (the other two are understanding and speech).

Befindlichkeit is initially explained as the ordinary 'being in a mood', as a feeling or affect, more generally intended as the state in which one may be found. In the German language this expression (*sich befinden*) means both feeling and where one finds oneself. However, Heidegger's concept of *Befindlichkeit* offers a radically different way of thinking about this ordinary experience. It refers to the kind of beings that humans are: they suffer under the weight of being, a weight that they must carry, because they cannot choose otherwise. Day after day as *Dasein* goes through life it breaks out with the naked knowledge that 'it is and has to be'. This existential state doesn't offer any elucidation with regard to any other type of being above it or from whom it may receive its being.

If Stein described the human being as a carrier, by Heidegger the image is one of a heavy burden: "Being has become manifest as a burden. Why that should be, one does not *know*. And *Dasein* cannot know anything of the sort because the possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods, in which *Dasein* is brought before its Being as 'there' (SZ, p. 173).

As Stein pointed out, the existential state of *Dasein*, which was initially introduced as an elected being among beings, in so far it was the one whom the question of the meaning of being should be asked to, not only reveals its absence of self-sufficiency but also proves that it cannot offer any answers to such questions for the simple reason that any knowledge of other forms

of being are precluded from it on the grounds of its *Befindlichkeit*. The idea of thrownness of the *Dasein* does not represent an example of its sovereignty, but is instead the concrete proof that there is a 'there-to-come' and a 'there-after' that must be investigated, since for Heidegger only the pure 'now' of the *Dasein*'s being shows itself, the 'where from' and 'where to' are hidden in darkness.

It is worth emphasising how the image and the terminological choices by Heidegger contain a certain dynamic energy: *Dasein* is not placed in being but thrown; it is not a passage, a transformation or a birth, but a hard break-in, its life experience is one characterised by negative feelings only: burden, ignorance (as the possibility of knowing is precluded), anxiety and fear. Because of the negative nature of this understanding, Stein finds Heidegger's description of the *Dasein* a circular argument: because of its finitude the *Dasein* finds itself being thrown into existence with no possibility of connecting itself with something outside of it or of explaining its being from itself. At the same time it cannot motivate its being or have any control of its beginning or end: time slides over it, and it is not able to grasp it. Its life is ultimately reduced to a run from moment to moment, to escape nothingness and no-more-being that eventually catches up with it, a running from nothing to nothing. It cannot either stop it or avoid it, and in this way its being is never in its possession. It never rests in being and never has true self-possession.

In confrontation with such a limited view, Stein's question is what is the difference between being thrown and being held in being? Her initial

analysis of the ego, which has the same basic characteristics of the *Dasein*, is concluded with the following remarks:

“The being of the ego is alive only from moment to moment. It cannot be quiescent because it is restlessly in flight. It thus never attains true self-possession. And we are therefore forced to conclude that the being of the ego, as a constantly changing living present, is not autonomous but received being. It has been placed into existence and is sustained in existence from moment to moment” (EES, p. 54).

This initial difference between being thrown and being placed is not without significance, as it opens the road to Stein’s questioning of the whereabouts of the *Dasein*, she wonders particularly how would it be otherwise possible to conceive of a flinging of something, without also conceiving of the person or the force that flings it? Is it not a fact - that we *are* here and now, aware of our very personal being, but without being able to justify it in our finitude – that can be even better defined with the term ‘received’? And if so, what is the difference between ‘thrownness’ and the gift of being? In fact the acceptance of the existential state of ‘thrownness’ does not elude from the question concerning one’s origin: “One might try by whatever power to silence it [the question] till it dies or to prohibit it as meaningless – it always inevitably arises again from the displayed distinctiveness of the human being and requires a something which is founding without being founded, something which founds itself: One that throws the ‘thrown’. Thus thrownness reveals itself as creatureliness” (MHE, p. 71).

To further explain this type of safety Stein compares it to the secure feeling of a child who is carried in the arms of its mother. It is not a ‘rational’

security, based on *a-priori* evidence or self-assurance, but a sort of inner serenity. Nevertheless she asks if it would be considered rational for the child to live in the constant fear that his mother might let it fall. Stein opens the door to the possibility of an eternal being that is 'support and ground of my own being'. Is this a religious answer?

Does the idea of an eternal, never ending and everlasting being, arising in the human being 'naturally' automatically put the question of being into the territory of belief or is the experience of the security of being a phenomenon that is possible to experience? Stein provides a theory: 'the way of faith', which is different from the way of philosophical reasoning, and suggests that it could be 'the answer of another world to a question which philosophy poses'. However, how is it possible to pin down the experience of the security of being, an experience that is said to be 'a rather dim and indefinite feeling that can hardly be called knowledge'?

The philosophical way offers traditional arguments to prove God's existence according to Aquinas: in her discussion with Heidegger about 'thrownness' Stein has already introduced the idea of God as 'unmovable mover', she goes on to comment on Aquinas' thesis of God as first cause, necessary being and necessary existence. Later she would also introduce the idea of God as order and truth.

Stein described the experience of the security-of-being with the same word *Geborgenheit* in one of her early works, which she wrote immediately after her working with Husserl in Freiburg from 1918 to 1920 (*Einführung*

in die Philosophie)⁵³. This is the time in which her decision to convert to Catholicism matured and also the years that are generally referred to by her biographies as a time of deep personal crisis. From early 1918, when she received the news of the death of her teacher Reinach, Stein started to face a series of difficulties in her professional and sentimental life that shattered the grounds of her previous beliefs, threw her plans for the future into confusion and consumed her mental and physical energies. Among these difficulties was the decision to leave her position of personal assistant with Husserl and the disappointment about the impossibility of working together in an intellectual collaboration, the negative response of the university in Göttingen where she applied for a habilitation and two close friendships that did not develop into romantic relationships, as she would have wished. It is easy to see how Stein anchors many of the philosophical remarks of this time to her life experiences.

What she describes is a sense of security which “seize us especially when we are in doubt, when our reason doesn’t see any way out or when nobody in the world has the will or the power anymore to advise us and help us” (ESGA 8, p. 171 – 172)⁵⁴. *Geborgenheit*, the feeling of being secure-

⁵³ The same expression ‘Sich-Geborgenfühlen-in-Gott’ is also used by Adolf Reinach to describe one of the possible ways of religious experience (see Beckmann, 2003, p. 124).

⁵⁴ This is a personal translation since the English translation of this work is not yet available. This is the original text: *In dem Gefühl der Geborgenheit, das uns oft gerade in ‚verzweifelter‘ Lage ergreift, wenn unser Verstand keinen möglichen Ausweg mehr sieht und wenn wir auf der ganzen Welt keinen Menschen mehr wissen, der den willen oder die Macht hätte, uns zu raten und zu helfen: in diesem Gefühl der Geborgenheit werden wir uns der Existenz einer geistigen Macht inne, die uns keine äußere Erfahrung lehrt. Wir wissen nicht, was weiter aus uns werden soll, vor uns scheint ein Abgrund zu gähnen und das Leben reit uns unerbittlich hinein, denn es geht vorwärts und duldet keinen Schritt zurück; aber indem wir zu stürzen meinen, fühlen wir uns „in Gottes Hand“, die uns trägt und nicht fallen lässt, Einführung in die Philosophie, ESGA 8, Freiburg 2004, S. 171-172.*

in-being is connected to an 'inner force', which cannot be gained by any outside experiences but arises in the core of the person and is simply felt, like an awareness: "we still don't know what will become of us, it looks like there is an abyss opening in front of us, and life keeps inexorably pushing us on, going on and not allowing any step back; but just when we are about to fall, we feel that we are 'in God's hands', and he carries us and is not letting us fall" (ESGA 8, p. 171).

This passage has an even greater significance when one considers that Stein was not yet openly religious, although she had become nearer to the church and she had started considering conversion. In fact it is, for the first time in 1918 that Stein described in *Sentient Causality* the state of 'resting in God' as follows:

"Compared to the cessation of activeness from the lack of life-power, resting in God is something completely new and unique. The former was dead silence. Now its place is taken by the feeling of being safe, of being exempted from all anxiety and responsibility and duty to act. And as I surrender myself to this feeling, new life begins to fill me up, little by little, and impels me – without any voluntary exertion – toward new activation" (Stein, 2000, p. 84-85).

This analysis of an inner force and the way that it takes hold of the person and refills it with new energy is an important element of the structure of the human soul. Even more important are the presuppositions for this force to be able to act: the trustful and sincere opening of the human being to receive this force as a gift and in doing so collaborating in its action. All of this will be considered at a later point in this work. For the moment it is important to comment on how in Stein's description of the state of

security-in-being, which is diametrically opposite to Heidegger's thrownness, a series of positive personal feelings play an important role: security, trust and empowerment, against Heidegger's emptiness, endangeredness, anguish and anxiety. Finally, according to Stein, the human being actively welcomes a positive force and in doing so facilitates it. This also contrasts with the position of the *Dasein*, which is thrown into existence without meaning or hope.

3.8. Everydayness and inauthenticity: the Characterisation of 'das Man'

There is a further element that characterises the *Dasein's* being-in-the-world. The subject of the everyday *Dasein* is said to be inauthentic, not a proper self, but a 'man-selbst' [They-self]⁵⁵. Heidegger expresses this concept with the use of the neutral undetermined pronoun 'man': the 'man' is a possibility of the *Dasein's* being and it is used to stress the idea that it lives an existence that is not authentic. It is correct to say that the 'who' of the *Dasein* 'answer itself in terms of the 'I' itself, the 'subject', the 'self' (SZ, p. 151). Heidegger does not dispute therefore the givenness of the I, however "the question arises whether giving the 'I' in the way we have mentioned discloses *Dasein* in its everydayness, if it discloses *Dasein* at all" (p. 151).

⁵⁵ To translate the use of the German 'man' that has the meaning of a general impersonal subject (man glaubt = one believe, they believe, it is believed) many English translations chose to use 'they'. I will use the original German expression.

The fact that the *Dasein* is said to be in a world with-others must not be understood in a relational intersubjective way. Heidegger's remarks that the world is simply already given 'with-others' and that these others are not 'everyone else but me', but rather 'those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too' (SZ, p. 154). The dimension of the *Dasein*'s solitude starts now to become clearer. "With' and 'too' are to be understood existentially, not categorically. By reason of this with-like [*mit-haften*] being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with others. The world of *Dasein* is a with-world [*Mit-welt*]. Being-in is being-with-others. Their being-in-themselves within-the-world is *Dasein*-with [*Mit-dasein*]. What emerges is the image of a human being which is mostly in the world as an impersonal 'it', where others don't represent the possibility of connections or relations but are only 'given-with'.

Stein wonders at this point if there is a state in which *Dasein* is disclosed to itself. This is said to be "anguish that brings the 'world' as such in sight. It is anguish 'for' being-alone-in-the-world (as 'solus ipse'), i.e. for an authentic being from which *Dasein* in its deterioration flees into the world and the 'man'" (MHE, p. 61). It appears therefore that the basic state of anguish (*Angst*) has two sides: the in-front-of-what (*Wovor*) and the what-for (*Worum*). The *Dasein* does not fear something outside but it fears itself. It is afraid of being-in-the-world-itself (*in-der Welt-sein-als-solches*). In its attempt to escape this condition, it falls back into the world and in the impersonality of the 'man'. As a consequence of this the world and its life

loses sense and comes to mean nothing. Stein argues that no sense or order is to be found in a life that has finitude as the only possible end. Heidegger's attempts to understand *Dasein* from itself rather than from the world or from nature eliminates any possible way out of finitude, solitude and meaninglessness.

When the world appears to have nothing more to offer, not even in the presence of others or in the possibility to truly understand itself, the *Dasein* is rejected into itself again. The consequence of this is the *Unheimlichkeit* of the *Dasein*: the feeling of 'not being at home', being on its own, being a stranger to the world.

The main element that Stein highlights is the disclosure of the nullity of the *Dasein*. She discusses very directly Heidegger's theory of existential anxiety in the second chapter of *Finite and Eternal Being* where she refers to it as the ego that refuses the idea of eternal being, which is an idea that once grasped must necessarily become the measure of its own being. However, the ego that lives in fear of its transiency will hide its superficial view of life "under the veil of multiple 'cares' [*Sorgen*]" to hide "the sight of life's nullity" (EES, p. 57 – 58).

Stein is lapidary in her criticism: anxiety cannot under any circumstances be considered to be the ordinary dominant mood of human life; rather it is a pathological condition. To support this thesis she describes with analytic objectivity the most general feelings of the human being, who goes through life 'almost as securely' as if it has control over its existence. I believe that this statement must be read in the light of everyday experience:

whilst everyone would agree that we are not in total control of our existence, which can end or be endangered at any time (one could be the victim of a car accident or any number of unpredictable fatal events), what Stein is trying to say is that a person who worries constantly about the fact that he could die is generally recognised to be suffering from some form of pathological depression or phobia. Constant worry, although due to the specific character, history and personality of each one of us, is evidently not to be considered the ordinary healthy state of a person.

In this instance Stein opposes the fear and insecurity of existence and the experience of a living present that never rests. This leads her to a consideration of death and to the necessary idea of an eternal being, which she describes in terms of inexplicable but irrefutable certainty:

“The undeniable fact that my being is limited in its transience from moment to moment and thus exposed to the possibility of nothingness is counterbalanced by the equally undeniable fact that despite this transience, I *am*, that from moment to moment I am *sustained in my being* and that in my fleeting being I share in enduring being. In the knowledge that being holds me, I rest securely” (EES, p. 58).

At this point Stein progresses to analyse in depth what Heidegger introduces as the only possibility of authenticity, which discloses itself to the *Dasein* in its end.

3.9. Death as fulfilment?

The last element of Stein's critique of Heidegger is the analysis of the end of being: Heidegger's understanding of death and dying and his description of *being-towards-death*. Stein introduces this important topic, to which she dedicates the largest portion of her critique, as follows: "If *Dasein* is concerned with its own possibility, this obviously entails that there is something which is not yet. In order to be grasped in its totality, also its end – death – must be grasped, something which is only possible in being towards death" (MHE, p. 62).

The question of the end of *Dasein* leads according to Stein to more common questions on the meaning of being and its end: where do I come from? Where do I go? What is the meaning of my being (life, existence) and of my death? The pre-reflexive attitude of the phenomenological method tries to experience and to study objects in the way that they 'reveal themselves': to accept them. With the same attitude Stein described the fact that in my being I experience not only fear and anxiety, but also security and strength: "At every moment I find myself face to face with nothingness, and from moment to moment I must be endowed and re-endowed with being. And yet this empty existence that I am is being, and at every moment I am in touch with the fullness of being" (EES, p. 55).

According to Heidegger death means neither completion nor fulfilment. It merely demonstrates the *Da* (there) of the *Dasein*: it dies due to its mortality. Death does not refer to the ending of a human life; it is rather a

condition in which the *Dasein* can find itself. It is also not clear how and to what depth Heidegger describes the event of the end of life. In § 49 of *Being and Time* it states:

“Death, in the widest sense, is a phenomenon of life. (...) *Dasein* too ‘has’ its death, of the kind appropriate to anything that lives; and it has it not in ontical isolation, but as codetermined by its primordial kind of being. In so far as this is the case, *Dasein* too can end without authentically dying, though on the other hand *qua* *Dasein*, it doesn’t simply perish. We designate this intermediate phenomenon as its *demise* [*Ableben*]. *Dying* is instead a name for the *way of being* [*Seinsweise*], in which the *Dasein* *is-for-his-death* [*zu seinem Tode ist*]. Accordingly we must say that *Dasein* never perishes. *Dasein*, however, can demise only as long as it is dying” (SZ, p. 290 – 291).

It is correct to say that Heidegger’s understanding of death has the precise aim to provide the ground for the three characteristics of the structure of *Dasein* (Inwood, 1997, p. 69 - 70). I will follow here Inwood’s differentiation although I will focus only on certain aspects in the light of Stein’s analysis:

- The first one is that the *Dasein*’s awareness that it will die shapes its whole life. *Dasein* is constantly ahead of itself because of its impending end and this is the hidden reason behind the *Dasein*’s resolutions. In fact Heidegger states that ‘being-at-hand’ implies existentially being-toward-death (SZ, p. 293). However it is confusing as to how this existential state rather than opening more possibility for the life of the *Dasein*, perhaps serves as motivation and drive, seems to represent instead the *Dasein*’s ownmost potentiality-to-be: “If *Dasein* stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-being. When it stands before

itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one" (SZ, p. 294). These remarks open the way to the next characteristic of the Dasein that is highlighted by death: it's solitude.

- Heidegger is adamant in his interpretation that death is always 'mine': "No one can take the other's dying away from him" and "death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-being in which the very being of one's own *Dasein* is an issue. In dying, it is shown that mineness and existence are ontologically constitutive for death. Dying is not an event; it is a phenomenon to be understood existentially" (SZ, p. 284). The possibility of death breaks up the inauthenticity of the *Dasein*: it is not 'man' or 'they' that dies, but it is I. In refusing the possibility of experiencing the death of others Heidegger remarks on how the only death that Dasein can possibly know and experience is its own because it can only belong to its being: "the dying of others is not something which we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just 'there alongside'" (SZ, p 282).
- The last characteristic is the insistence on the temporality of the *Dasein* and the understanding of time itself. Heidegger asks if time does go on after the *Dasein's* death and if so 'can there not be an unlimited number of things which still lie 'in the future' and come along out of it?' (SZ, p. 378) and he answers affirmatively. Having stated that *Dasein's* being is essentially 'futural', Heidegger describes

here what he names the three 'ecstasies' of temporality, which are past (have-been), present and future. He then remarks on how future is the one that has primacy, although only the present of the moment can bring the *Dasein* to its authentic self. In this resolution the *Dasein* comes back to itself and discloses the 'factual possibility of authentic existence' (SZ, p. 435). It is clearly stated that time can go on forever, after the end of the *Dasein*, but what ultimately matters ends with the *Dasein*. A possibility for the *Dasein* to authentically grasp its finitude and become 'free-for-death' is offered by the concept of 'fate', in which the *Dasein* can project itself upon anxiety and guilt. The structure of fate is equivalent to the one of 'care' and brings together the knowledge and acceptance of death, guilt, conscience, freedom and finitude. Stein quotes, in this regard, the following passage, without commenting on it explicitly: "Only an entity which in its being, is essentially *futural* so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factual 'there' by shattering itself against death (...) can ... take over its own thrownness and be *in the moment of vision* for 'its' time" (SZ, p. 437). Heidegger calls this state 'authentic temporality' which is at the same time finite and historically authentic. However it remains unclear as to whether the *Dasein's* state of being-free-for-death can offer any enlightenment on the phenomenon of death itself.

Let us now consider how Stein responds to Heidegger's approach to the *Dasein's* death. In her analysis she is immediately puzzled by the

description of the phenomena at the end of the human life. In other words, she had followed Heidegger's way and was disappointed by his final conclusions: it was to be assumed that the ultimate meaning of *Dasein* was to be clarified by the examination of its last possibility: death (and its 'being towards death'); but 'how is this possible: "if nothing else can be said of death except that it is the end of *Dasein*? Is this not a completely fruitless circularity?" (MHE, p. 75).

Stein argues in particular that the analysis remains purely 'of this world', even if it is evident that what death is cannot really be clarified by the analysis of the *Dasein* as has been offered, as the possibility of life after death, or the hypothesis of a 'passage' of the *Dasein* to a further state, is precluded from the beginning. In §49 of *Being and Time* Heidegger declares: "If 'death' is defined as the 'end' of *Dasein*, that is to say, of Being-in-the-world [*in der Welt sein*], this does not imply any ontical decision whether 'after death' still another Being is possible, either higher or lower, or whether *Dasein* 'lives on' or even 'outlasts' itself and is 'immortal'" and more clearly he concludes "our analysis of death remains purely 'this-worldly' in so far as it interprets that phenomenon merely in the way in which it enters into any particular *Dasein* as a possibility of its being. Only when death is conceived in its full ontological essence can we have any methodological assurance in even asking what may be after death" (SZ, p. 292). Furthermore he does not consider as part of his current analysis the decision as to whether it is *theoretically* possible to pose this question.

Heidegger investigated the possibility of one's own death and the death of others, coming to the conclusion that one can only experience one's own. Stein firstly argued with Heidegger's exclusions *a-priori* that the definition of death as 'end of *Dasein*' could open up the possibility of life after death. This appears to be a decision that – once again – favours a precise direction of the investigation. The same is valid for Heidegger's remarks on the theoretical legitimation of the question of life after death, which can only be rightfully asked once the meaning of death is clarified. It should therefore be possible to presume that 'the being-in-the-world of human beings ends, without them thereupon ceasing to be in another sense', however this will de-legitimise Heidegger's previous analysis which 'although underlining other existential besides being-in-the-world, did not regard these as separable' (MHE, p. 75). The possibility of a life of the *Dasein* beside or outside its being-in-the-world is therefore analytically impossible.

One must agree with Antonio Calcagno's opinion about Stein's analysis of death (Calcagno, 2007)⁵⁶. It is true, in fact, that she makes great use of her own experience as a nurse during World War I, and refers to the impact that witnessing others die had on her. How can it be possible – she wonders - to describe death in only one way, when there are so many deaths, each unique, and so many states of sufferance, peace, fear, acceptance, despair or faith, involved in the process?

⁵⁶ I refer to Calcagno's analysis "Die Fülle oder das Nichts? Martin Heidegger and Edith Stein on the Question of Being" which appeared in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 2, also in *The Philosophy of Edith Stein* (Calcagno, 2007).

It is certainly correct to say that we cannot experience the death of others, not at least in the same way as that of our own, as Heidegger states, yet seeing these deaths is fundamental for our knowledge of what death is and means, and changes our understanding of it forever. It is also true that much of what dying means can be already anticipated in life. However Stein finds it important to distinguish between 'anguish', which is the state that precedes death and for Heidegger the state that reveals to human beings their finitude and imminent death in the 'being toward death', and 'resoluteness' in which the human being reaches an understanding or acceptance of its 'being toward death'. It is Stein's opinion that Heidegger focuses only on the existential state of anguishing, without fully grasping what one anguishes about.

It clearly emerges from Heidegger's investigation that the reason for the natural anguish of the human being is its being. However it is not the same 'wherefore' and 'where-about' one is anguished:

"That wherefore one is anguished is the possibility not to be, to which anguish testifies: it is the experience of *the nothingness of our being*. That about which one is anguished, and likewise that about which human beings are concerned in their own being, is being as *a fullness, which one would like to preserve and not leave behind - of which there is no mention in Heidegger's entire analysis of Dasein* and through which it would nevertheless first be founded. If *Dasein* were simply not-being, then no anguish would be possible *for* the ability-not-to-be and *about* the possibility to be. Both are possible because human beings share in a fullness from which something continually slips and something is continually won: both life and death" (MHE, p. 76).

It is hard to question the logic behind these thoughts: there is no doubt that humans fear for their lives and fight to conserve it, in the same way that it is evident that they suffer at the idea of relinquishing their life and if

anything this proves that their being appears to be something they are concerned with. This concern, which is also recognised by Heidegger, stands in contradiction with the impossibility of asking about what comes after death. However, since Heidegger does not extend his analysis to a being that is full existence and also in possession of its being in time, i.e. eternal, the question is left unanswered.

Once again, Stein's attention for the human feelings that characterise the state of the human being in its being-toward-death is notable. This is Stein's ultimate criticism of Heidegger's approach to the problem of being: after declaring that the question of being belongs to *Dasein*, to the human being, and that the analysis of death can disclose the real significance of the *Dasein* and that from solving this problem we can define what the human being is, Heidegger arranges everything in his analysis in a way that can only lead to reduce it even more to its finitude and ultimately to its death. Although it should be about human life, his investigation 'leaves no room for what gives human life fullness: joy, happiness, love' (MHE, p. 80). The only human states which are investigated are fear, anguish, and care (for oneself). Can such an analysis be representative, and most importantly complete? Have all aspects that play a role in the being of the *Dasein* been taken into account? Stein's answer is 'no': the life of the human being according to Heidegger appears as a rush from moment to moment, as an escape from itself and ultimately into death, as living discloses itself to be in fact already a 'being for death'.

It is important to highlight how Stein doesn't fully reject Heidegger's thesis, it is considered to be only a part of the full picture: "care and temporality are therefore in no way the final meaning of the human being, but rather – according to their own testimony – what must be surpassed as far as possible, in order to reach the fulfilment of the meaning of being" (MHE, p. 80). In other words eternal life is described by Stein as the full possession of what can only be experienced partially in 'this' life, the same being 'about which human existence is', only with no anguish, no limits and no tension.

After demonstrating how the human being is not in control of its being and how it struggles and desires that fullness that it can experience only in a limited way, Stein introduces Aquinas' idea of the vocation of the human being for eternal life: only so can it unfold its true essence.

Chapter 4. For an Ontology of the Person

In this chapter I will present Stein's response to Heidegger's description of the human being as it has emerged from the analysis of *Being and Time* and I will argue that Stein's arguments against Heidegger's theory and methodology have a deeper significance for the understanding of human life. To this end, Stein's personal ontology will be extrapolated *in primis* from *Finite and Eternal Being* and the appended essay on Heidegger; however, a few passages of Stein's mature anthropological work and especially her description of the structure of the person (ESGA 14) provide much needed support.

I will present four main concepts and themes that emerge from Stein's confrontation with Heidegger's work, and draw upon them to place her reflections into a wider ethical context. These themes offer not only an interesting and fruitful contribution to current studies of the philosophy of Edith Stein, but also demonstrate the importance and relevance of Stein's philosophical theory, and especially the significance of her position towards Heidegger for contemporary ethics.

After a brief explanation of Stein's evaluation of Christian philosophy and how faith plays an essential role in her philosophical investigation, I will investigate the following themes: a. The significance of Stein's idea of the 'fullness' of being and how this idea shapes the structure of the human person; b. The analysis of the 'gift' of being and the discovery of 'acceptance' as a structural moment of 'being-a-person'; c. The definition of being as 'received' and how a phenomenology of 'givenness' can help clarify the

relationship between the human person and the eternal being, and can offer an answer to the more general question of the meaning of being; d. Stein's understanding of the phenomenon of death and dying and the question as to whether a genuine knowledge of mortality can constitute an important element of the human person.

In the final section of this chapter I draw upon Stein's insights on end-of-life issues and outline how a positive acceptance and understanding of the experience of death as part of life can play an important role for contemporary medical ethics, especially regarding end-of-life care. In stating this I fully agree with Gerl-Falkovitz's opinion that not only was Stein ahead of her time in many theoretical insights, but also that her philosophy contains 'deep impulses' that today – and perhaps only today – can be rightly viewed and valued for the profundity of their impact' (Gerl, 1991, p. 11).

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4.1. Faith and the search for truth

The main thrust of Stein's arguments against Heidegger take issue with the following point: as Stein sees it, Heidegger puts the human being at the centre of his analysis but does not want to take into consideration the fact that this being has knowledge of other forms of beings around it along with understanding of a higher one. She wonders if it is correct to say that the being of *Dasein* is the only possible one, or whether it can also make sense – while still questioning the meaning of the human being – to question other forms of being (eternal being) as well.

It is not the aim of this research to offer a comprehensive overview of Stein's thoughts concerning the human person, since such a task would be outside the scope of this work. This is especially because Stein's theory of the person extends into many different fields and touches multiple disciplines. It is however necessary at this stage to clarify Stein's metaphysical position, which is influenced by both phenomenology and Christian philosophy.

Stein dedicates part of her introduction to *Finite and Eternal Being* to the question 'Is there a Christian philosophy?' (EES, p.12). This is the question of whether a rigorous philosophical analysis should rely exclusively on reason and experience, or accept the additional light from revelation, as medieval philosophy does. Stein makes here an interesting use of Jacques Maritain's distinctions between the nature of philosophy and the

actual situation or condition of philosophy⁵⁷, which she quotes to explain how the philosophical thinking should be composed of both an enduring intellectual habit *and* a vital intellectual activity (p. 14). As such philosophy is a *Wissenschaft*, a science, and presupposes the existence of an objective reality and of knowing intellects. Science tends towards knowledge, and “represents the total precipitate of the efforts of the human mind in its pursuit of truth” (p. 15).

In light of this insight, Stein explores how philosophy is different from every other discipline, in the following sense: philosophy concerns itself with the ultimate clarification of the fundamental principles of all sciences. Christian revelation could in this sense enrich philosophy itself and offer contents of knowledge, which lie beyond the reach of a human experience based on a purely human foundation (Stein remarks that Maritain calls this possibility a ‘scandal’ to human reason). Stein concludes: “there are existents, which are beyond the reach of natural experience and natural reason but which have been made known to us by revelation; and they confront the receptive human mind with entirely new tasks.” (p. 21).

Sarah Borden explains Stein’s reasoning in the following passage:

“If something is made visible to the thinker through a higher Light, then it is unreasonable to attempt to understand the ultimate structure of reality depending only on what is known through one’s own light, especially when convinced that it is indeed a meagre light. What has been revealed is not simply incomprehensible. It is intelligible in itself and intelligible to us in the measure to which we have been given light to see. Thus, Stein argues, if a philosopher wishes to understand being in all its fullness and depth, then he or she cannot remain simply within mere natural reason but, rather, must

⁵⁷ Stein is referring to Maritain’s book, *De la philosophie chrétienne*, Paris, 1933.

enrich her philosophy with theology, without it, however, becoming theology.” (Borden, 2003, p. 96)

At this stage it is important to stress that Stein’s methodology is strictly a philosophical one, in that she intends philosophy to be: collaboration between human reasoning, life experience and the search for truth. Stein highlights the necessity of conducting her search on philosophical ground; however she recognises that such a search is inevitably contextualized by Revelation: to reach the ultimate clarity philosophy must embrace the revealed truth.

Her investigation is undertaken at the limits of philosophical thinking, where many of the insights she explores are already crossing the line between reasoning and belief. She describes the knowledge of ‘an ultimate hold and ground’ of my being as a ‘rather dim and indefinite feeling’, which can hardly be called knowledge. Such an investigation does not presuppose conceptual barriers, therefore she argues that in Heidegger’s analysis “a barrier is raised everywhere where a view could open onto the eternal, therefore there cannot exist an essence distinct from existence that could develop in existence, no meaning distinct from understanding that is grasped in understanding, no ‘eternal truth’ independent of human understanding” (MHE, p. 82).

According to Stein, the ultimate ground of the human person is ineffable. Even when language is at its limits, Stein uses images to further describe the connections between existing being and eternal being that appear almost poetic; and yet can be found in everyday life. In the same way

that she compared the feeling of 'being held securely in existence' with the security of the child in the arms of its mother, Stein uses similar simple images to describe the relationship between the human being and the eternal one: a mirror that offers a perfectly reflected image of the original object, or again the way a refracted ray of light reproduces un-refracted light⁵⁸.

What does this style of writing suggest? Stein has no desire to explain the human being completely: its soul maintains its mystery and is described as having a 'dark' depth. Stein's search for truth takes into account what revelation can offer: her philosophical investigation aims to ask questions whose answers may belong to another world, but must be asked in order to understand the human being along with other beings, which 'will of course not answer in the same way as a human being answers' (MHE, p. 82).

But what is the role of faith and how can it help the work of philosophy? Wolfe is right when she writes "for a Thomist thinker like Stein, a phenomenological analysis of human existence risks not merely incompleteness but incoherence by bracketing the divine" (Wolfe, p. 157)⁵⁹. However Stein overcomes the traditional understanding of Christian philosophy proposed by Przywara: she agrees with Przywara's definition of philosophy as *reduction ad mysterium* (EES, p. 25); however, she does not agree with the idea of philosophy and theology working together as equals

⁵⁸ "A better comparison that might be adduced is the relationship that exists between a refracted image and the object that is reflected, or between a refracted ray of light and the un-refracted light. But even these are imperfect analogies with which we are trying to elucidate something which really allows of no comparison." (EES, p. 347).

⁵⁹ In this passage Wolfe compares Stein's Catholic Neo-Scholasticism with Heidegger's Lutheran eschatology,

“within the frame of a metaphysics”. Stein hypothesizes that the philosophy could work *with the help* of theology, not *as* theology itself: “precisely because philosophy (not theology) must have its contents augmented, it faces the task of elaborating a unified and comprehensive doctrine” (EES, p. 25), and furthermore “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”. The difference between Stein’s and Heidegger’s approach couldn’t be more striking, where he interprets the *Seinsmodus* of faith as a defeat for reason and freedom (see p. 68).

Stein however does not describe the light of faith as a clarifying, explicatory enlightenment; on the contrary it’s a dark light, which places ‘everything intelligible’ in a setting with an incomprehensible background. Faith cannot be processed and understood rationally, it is something that is received and accepted: its content is the gift of revealed truth. In her last book on the *mystical* theology of St *John of the Cross*, Stein reflects on the symbol of the dark night through which the human soul must pass to find God⁶⁰. Faith is darkness for human reason: but at this stage Stein is more interested in the act of faith, which implies the acceptance of God: to have faith means to strive toward God: “Faith is thus a taking hold of God. This kind of seizure, however, presupposes a being seized. In other words, we cannot believe without divine grace. Once we open ourselves to grace and

⁶⁰ Stein, *Kreuzeswissenschaft* (Scientia Crucis). *Studie über Johannes vom Kreuz*, ESGA 18. While in the Echt Carmel Stein received the task of preparing a study on the mystical thoughts of St. John of the Cross to celebrate the fourth centenary of his birth. The manuscript of *Kreuzwissenschaft*, on which she worked between 1940 and 1942, is left incomplete when Stein is deported in August 1942.

accept the gift of faith, we have ‘within us the beginning of eternal life’” (EES, p. 27).

It is the description of an encounter, which could not be possible without the help of Revelation. God is already present in the innermost of the human soul, but the soul must open itself to him in a loving manner: it is an intimate union that requires the participation of each part.

4.2. The fullness of being

The emptiness of the *Dasein* is opposed to the fact that the person experiences a ‘fullness of being’. The latter is initially described as having various degrees that allow the ego to come closer to absolute actuality of being. The ego is therefore ‘capable of arriving at the idea of eternal being’ on the basis of its natural experience.

From Stein’s description of the human being the structure of an individual ‘I’ that is also the ‘carrier’ of being emerges – which is entrusted with being. In contradistinction to Heidegger, Stein explains the relationship between the carrier and its content: it is true that the ego appears to be the ‘carrier of experiential fullness’, much like a ‘thingly’ form carries the fullness of its contents, however the personal being is far from being an empty form, since in its case “empty form and its fullness are not merely externally conjoined but belong together essentially” (p. 359), therefore in the case of the human person the ‘carrying’ must be something different from what is generally understood.

Stein suggests that the person is the carrier (*hypostasis*) of rational nature as well as spiritual nature. This distinction is contained in the differentiation of spirit, which relates to both spirit and reason (EES, p. 360). In her early essay *Nature, Freedom and Grace* Stein described spirit as a 'going-out-of-itself', in the same way that life that 'emanates' from the being of the person and makes the person aware that its own life is 'its very own' (at this stage Stein is still describing the life of the ego). Now she can distinguish a further step, which is that "the personal ego must, in addition, be capable of understanding its own life and of moulding it freely out of its own self" (EES, p. 362). From this description it is possible to extrapolate two important characteristics that belong to the personal being, reason and freedom, as explained in this passage:

"If then to being-person there pertains the gift of rationality or intelligence, the person as such must possess reason and freedom. And we thus arrive at the distinction between ego and person and are justified in saying that not every ego need be a personal ego. On the other hand, every person must be an ego. [...] Our understanding of the person as an ego and of the ego as the carrier of its own life has made it possible for us to describe the specific manner in which the person is the carrier of its *life*" (EES, p. 363).

But what is the aim of Stein's analysis? It is stated that at the core of the human being there is what is firstly defined as its essence, or "quidditive determinateness [*Wasbestimmtheit*], i.e. that which makes the human being a human being" (EES, p. 363). This pertains to the soul of the person, the most intimate part that is described as allowing the human being to share eternal being, and also the conscious life of the person, in the way that it participates in the world around it. The relation that the human being has

with eternal being is an intimate one, which is entirely based on the structure of personhood.

It is necessary to take a close look at the different parts that form the human person, which are very clearly stated as being body, soul and spirit, however not as a mere summary of elements, but rather as an living harmonious organism. Stein describes the human being as having different layers, from the outside to the inside:

“The human soul *as* spirit rises in its spiritual life beyond itself. But the human spirit is conditioned both from above and from below. It is immersed in a material structure, which it be-souls and moulds into a bodily form. The human person carries and encloses ‘its’ body and ‘its’ soul, but it is at the same time carried and enclosed by both. The spiritual life [*geistiges Leben*] of the human person rises from a dark ground. It rises like a flame that illumines, but it is a flame that is nourished by a non-luminous matter. And it emits light without being light through and through” (EES, p. 364).

This wonderful passage helps explaining the way that the individual elements of the person relate to each other. The person has a undeniable bodily level as well as a soul/spiritual one, which must not be interpreted as similar to Russian dolls, where one simply exists inside the other, but rather ‘immersed and moulded’ into one another. To clarify this point and to aid the explanation of the structure of Stein’s different levels of human activity we can refer to Marianne Sawicki, in the editor’s introduction to *Philosophy and Psychology of the Humanities*: “Importantly, these divisions [the physical, the sensate, the mental and the personal level] are not to be reduced to the usual categories of ‘body’ and ‘soul’. Rather, all four alike are localized within the body, where all four express what is ordinarily termed the soul as well. Stein holds that these realms are mutually permeable:

influences travel across from one to another. Thus the human body itself is the interface of matter, sentience, and mind” (Stein, 2000, p. XV).

This helps clarify how different levels are interconnected and merged together, the same is valid for the structure of the human soul, which pertains to all these different realms, but has an inexplicable ‘dark’ ground. Stein remarks how the human person is more than its entire conscious life, and to understand it fully this depth must be penetrated.

The soul of the person is the centre of the body-soul-spirit unity and the foundation of spiritual life, rational actions and free decision. Stein engages in new imagery and definitions to describe the vivacity and the complexity of the human soul, a constitutive and undeniable part of the person, the absence of which she so strongly argued against in her criticism of Heidegger. The personal I feels ‘at home’ inside the soul and lives in it like in a ‘castle’ with many mansions “in which the I is able to move freely, now going outward beyond itself, now withdrawing into its own inwardness”. (EES, p. 373). It is now completely clear why Stein chose to append to her great *summa*, along with the essay on Heidegger, the other text titled *Die Seelenburg* (The Castle of the Soul), on the mystic of St. Teresa of Avila.

But how does the soul impact on human life and how can the person let itself be guided by it? Where do the inner life-force and the fullness of being come from? And most importantly: when postulating an inner centre of guidance and motivation, that can provide support and direction and that at the same time fuel human life, can it be argued this minimizes the human being’s share in controlling his or her life and actions and defeats the

person's autonomy, relegating it to the status of a simple creature? If the fullness of life originates from a higher being and this is the hidden source of the human being's energy, in which ways are personal freedom and human reason playing a role?

Stein gives an answer to these questions by clearing the interconnections between the I, the person and the soul. It was stated that the soul is a castle of many rooms, where the I freely lives: the I "is thus neither equivalent to the soul, nor to the body. It 'dwells' in body and soul" (EES, p. 374). Through the conscious life of the 'I', experiences and impressions can reach the depths of the soul. Here Stein makes distinctive use of the tools offered by phenomenological analysis, as well as her research on the empathic experience and the evidence of non-original feelings, using a common example from everyday life:

"It may happen that I believe I have 'overcome' some painful experience, and I have long since forgotten it. But suddenly some new experience brings it back to my memory, and the impression which this earlier experience now makes upon me as well as the thoughts which it now evokes make me realize that it has been working with me all the time and that, moreover, without it I would not be what I am today. This earlier experience has been working "within me", i.e. within my soul, in a depth which is hidden most of the time and which only occasionally becomes overt" (EES, p. 374).

This resource of useful memories and experiences, good and bad, stays with the person and shapes its being, on an un-reflected and non-conscious level. Evidence shows how connections between lived experiences and behaviour and thoughts can coexist in the person, hidden from its consciousness, and only reveal themselves at a later point. In this

way Stein describes how hidden life-forces, such as a motivational force, determination, and will power, can suddenly operate, after the personal ones have run out of steam⁶¹. The same can be applied to positive events, for instance for the person that still feels hope beyond any reasonable hope or is capable of mercy in the face of an unforgivable wrong that has been done. Stein attributes all these situations to an energy that is beyond human energy or physical energy, but that is also not an unknown one. It is the shining of a force that overpower the one of the person, but one that agrees with its spirit, perfects and brings to full power what is already present in the inner world of that person in an unperfected state.

In the language of religious belief this is the power of God that only can give hope, courage and strength to the human being. In the case of negative forces however, uncontrollable pulses could turn a person into a degenerate form of itself, perhaps because of traumas that had their origins in past experiences, which were believed to be forgotten, but had worked against – and in this case eroded – the soul. Only a personal active participation in experience that we welcome and that we let settle and operate inside us can help direct the way that personality is shaped. However, it is essential to stress that for Stein the ‘dormant’ powers that are hidden in the soul of the person are not seeds randomly present in each human being but only the results of the life experiences of each of us: “Whatever the person does freely and consciously is ego-life, but person draw their ego-life out of some greater or lesser depth” (EES, p. 376). This

⁶¹ See especially Stein, 2000, p. 79.

means that the person is not a blind puppet in the power of instinct and external forces but plays an active part in shaping who he/she is and in directing his/her life according to his/her values, interests and talents. The necessary co-action of the person is their prerogative for the fullness of being to act on the human soul.

The receptivity of the person is the sign of an open soul, as described in *Nature, Freedom, Grace* and in *Finite and Eternal Being*, this openness and capability to receive is a personal state which is characterized by trust, security, love and hope.

4.3. Receiving being: acceptance as a fundamental element of 'being-a-person'

The receptivity of the person is presented as a basic form of co-action which is necessary for the received being to fully operate. Stein uses similar expressions in a much earlier treatise, *Sentient Causality*, published in 1922 in Husserl's Yearbook. While describing the influx of mental and bodily-sensory life power, she describes a different condition: the state of 'resting-in-God' and relinquish all activities and decisions 'to fate', a state that can be encountered after all physical and mental forces have been exhausted by an energy depriving activity, an 'experience that has consumed' all 'mental life power and deprived' a person 'of all activeness'. In such an instance one can experience 'the feeling of being safe' in God, of not having to make any decisions or make any plans', Stein describes these changes as follows:

“As I surrender myself to this feeling, new life begins to fill me up, little by little, and impel me – without any voluntary exertion – toward new activation. This reviving infusion appears as an emanation of functionality and a power which is not my emanation and which becomes operative within me without my seeking for it. The sole prerequisite for such a mental rebirth seems to be a certain receptivity, like the receptivity supporting the structure of the person” (Stein, 2000, p. 85).

Here Stein notes the centrality of the expression ‘surrender’; but how does human receptivity work? It is said to be a state of the person, however it can also be traced back to the basic psychophysical attitude of the ego, which experiences external objects.

In her lectures on philosophical anthropology⁶² Stein identified the main characteristics of the personal structure of the human being as the fact that, when one looks in the eyes of another man, ‘his look answers me’ (AMP, p. 78). The ability to respond is set above all other elements of self-affirmation and self-conscience. Stein describes how when looking in the eyes of an animal, it will respond as well with a sort of assertion that it has noticed me, but its soul is the soul of a prisoner, it is aware of my presence but it cannot ‘possess itself’ and it cannot freely ‘get out of itself and come to me’. With another person, however, when looking into its eyes, it can let me penetrate its ‘inner world’ or reject me, it is the ‘lord of its soul and can open and close the doors of it’, and it can ‘go out of itself and come and penetrate

⁶² *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*, later AMP (ESGA 14) collects Stein’s lessons for a course on Philosophical Anthropology, which Stein taught at the German Institute for Scientific Pedagogy in Munster in 1932/1933. This was to be her last public teaching work before joining the Carmelites in Cologne. Stein had originally planned a second course on theological anthropology for the following semester, which is now published in ESGA 15 *Was ist der Mensch?* At this time Stein has also completed her work on Aquinas *Potenz und Akt* and submitted it at the University of Freiburg to obtain her habilitation.

other things'. She concludes by saying that when two men are in front of each other an encounter occurs, and the other 'I' becomes a 'Thou'. In the same chapter Stein describes the depth of the soul and uses the image of 'being at home' inside the soul, an intimate home that can be opened up and let something/someone else in (AMP, p. 86).

This analysis shows how Stein was already building the basis for her ontological understanding of the human person between 1930 and 1932. The effect of this analysis can be traced to *Finite and Eternal Being*, where Stein uses the word 'encounter' to describe the way that the soul can experience things outside of it and be shaped by them: "Everything that I consciously experience issues from my soul. It is an encounter of my soul with something that 'impresses' it" (EES, p. 375).

Stein gives great importance to the fact that the person has the capability of directing and choosing which direction to take in its life. God's grace is described as a gift, and as such the person can accept it or refuse it. It is important to clarify that even without being fully touched by the fullness of being the person does not live a semi-life but a fully conscious and morally awake life that resembles the perfect life of the eternal being. It is the choice of the person to let itself be touched, illuminated by the 'flame' that arises from its depth. The act of surrender is not to be understood as passive but as a free choice.

To use again Stein's image of the castle of the soul, the I can choose to live in the outside rooms, closer to external experiences and pulses, or withdraw in its inner centre and dedicate itself to a more intimate and

reserved life, cultivating the ability of knowing itself, getting in touch with its spiritual level. Only if the soul is open and lets itself be awoken by an external force, can the life of the person be fully actuated. This is not a complete transformation but only the full actuation of what is already there in *potentia*.

Because the human soul is not passively hit, but chooses, it is essential that it answers to any external forces operating on it. In the case of great life-changes these can happen on such an intimate level that perhaps even the conscious person does not realise the effects until the change is complete and the person becomes aware of it. Let's consider, for instance, Stein's conversion: before being able to name it, she described a world of 'phenomena' that was opening up in front of her eyes (i. e. the existing signs of God's love and grace in the events of her life and in the lives of people around her). Would it be correct to argue that such events suddenly started to happen or would it not be more appropriate to say that these or similar events were always present in her life and she was the one who suddenly started noticing them because of her stronger interest in them, because her soul was ready for it, having reached the necessary ability of being open without preconceptions, or simply because she felt inside that she needed to search for something to fill her life completely and faith was the right answer? Is this not, in a way, a path that originates from an honest questioning, a free decision and a reasonable searching, where at a certain point she encountered something, an undeniable evidence, a presence that changed her? Stein recapitulates this process in her comprehensive description of the human person:

“The person – understood as I, which encompasses, cognitively illuminates and freely governs body and soul – we have described as the carrier that stands behind and above the body-soul totality, or as the comprehensive form of body-soul fullness. [...] It sustains its life out of that fullness of the essence [*Wesensfülle*], which is resplendent in the awareness of life, without ever being fully illuminated or fully mastered. The person carries this fullness and is simultaneously carried or sustained by this dark and deep ground” (EES, p. 377).

This description echoes again the dimension of the ‘being-secure-in-being’ [*Geborgenheit*], which has already been clarified as a positive state when the human person experiences strength, security, trust and hope. It is not a reduction of the person to a mere creature, a reaffirmation of its dependence on the creator, but has instead the characteristics of an encounter. In the feeling of security and resting in God the human person encounters a higher being, this Other can be described, with the words of Martin Buber, as what is a ‘complete stranger’ but at the same time obvious and ‘present’⁶³. In this encounter the person is asked to put his/her life in God’s hands. This is not forced, but it is a possibility for its being, it is at all times a free decision and in this way it has the structure of a gift.

Only with a free act of a given gift the giver and the receiver are disclosed in their respective roles, since they do not exist outside of this structure, they do not exist without the gift. In fact both giver and receiver only become active in their respective roles in the moment of acceptance, since it is this free acceptance that qualifies the gift as such. If the object that is freely given was refused, or if it was taken rather than asked, or forced

⁶³ “Das ganz Anderen und doch das Selbstverständliche und Gegenwärtige“, Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, 1923.

upon rather than freely given, it would not be possible to recognize it as a gift. A gift does not exist *a priori* as such but it reveals itself as a gift in the moment of acceptance.

4.4. The gift of being

What can a phenomenology of 'givenness' offer to the structure of the human person? Stein succeeds in completing what both Husserl and Heidegger left incomplete. Husserl postulated a world of '*Gegebenheiten*', given entities that are there to grasp for the consciousness. However he never solved the question of the giver, in a similar way Stein rightly pointed out that in Heidegger's structure of the facticity of the human being, its 'thrownness', there is no mention of a 'thrower'. This of course does not mean that Stein completes the circle simply by postulating a higher being that acts as 'giver'. Much more important is the fact that the simple evidence of my life and existence, my being and everything that I am, is understood by Stein as a 'gift'. If I love somebody I will automatically welcome them as a gift in my life. This means that it is *because* my being has the characteristic of a gift *that* I am revealed to myself as a receiver and that an eternal being that has control of its being is disclosed to me as a giver, and not the other way round. The gift has priority.

Because of this particular structure of giver-gift-receiver, the moment of receiving being has the characteristics of a loving relation with a similar structure composed by lover-love-loved. This is because of the inner structure of love, which much like a gift cannot be taken, stolen, requested,

or forced, otherwise it will lose its inner structure. Its essence depends on the fact that it must be freely given, and even more importantly, freely accepted.

It gradually became evident that Stein's centrality of the gift of being discloses a third way between the traditional choices of an almighty being that rules the world and its creatures or the existential idea of a finite life that cannot offer any further explanations for the being of the human person. While keeping in mind the structure of giver-gift-receiver, let us first analyse these two possibilities:

- In the first case, the classical theory of an almighty creator and a receiving creature, the focus is on the 'giver', a higher being, God, a universal force that provides order and purpose for human life. The latter inevitably loses importance and meaning, because human life appears to be only a corrupted and limited version of the perfection of the eternal being. Why should life be worth living when there is no truth in it, no possibility of authentic experiences, and it is dependent on the continuous support of a higher being? This seems to be a return to a God-centred and idealistic understanding of life and time, with the human being as the passive element of this unbalanced relationship.

- In the second case the focus is on the 'receiver', the human being is not interested in finding a 'giver', it explains its life only by itself and its life ends because of its mortality: this explanation, however negative and nihilistic, attempts to investigate finitude as the only possible part of human life that can be experienced and therefore that can be known. Any possible form of control and self-affirmation for the human being is rejected, because

it is helpless in time, without being able to explain its wherefrom and its destination, with no meaning and no purpose. This is, of course, an existential interpretation of the human being, much like it can be found in Heidegger, and as such does not offer any real enlightenment concerning the definition of human life except describing its limits.

Stein solves this dilemma by concentrating on the middle term, the gift of being. This leads the way to an understanding of the human being as a receiver, entrusted with being and in control of its life decisions, called to live its life to the full. The human being can experience the eternal origin of its being through its experiences, through signs of a higher force, a deeper motivation, an unconditional love, that calls it to live in a positive and meaningful way to its full vocation. It can think and understand the idea of a never-ending being and a life after death that it can relate to. With this structure of a personal life which originates in the moment of the acceptance of being, Stein describes a life that is meaningful, trustful and joyful despite its temporal being and its limited existence, in fact, it is so because of its limits.

What Stein missed most in Heidegger's philosophy was the hypothesis of an immutable component of being, a sign of truth and authenticity that remains unchangeable and does not perish. There is no transcendence in the life of the *Dasein*, neither is there any real comprehension of anything outside of its finitude. Even the possibility of resoluteness, of an authentic moment of being can only last for the immediate present and cannot be carried forward. Can Heidegger's call from

consciousness be compared to a force from a deep place inside the human being, a call from the soul? The answer is no, because Heidegger's conscience is not grounded in any meaningful structure, as Stein explains: "[Heidegger] recognises a meaning distinct from understanding, but dissolves meaning into understanding – although meaning is related to understanding. [...] In fact the human being is caricatured already in what it shares with the being of things: in the deletion of its essentiality and substantiality" (MHE, p. 82).

Calcagno opposes Heidegger's emptiness to Stein's fullness of being, since there is a striking conflict concerning the absence of contents for the structure of the *Dasein* when compared to the great importance and significance given to the abundance of being that characterises the human person in Stein. Furthermore, I must agree here with the interpretation of Angela Ales Bello, who rightly highlights how Stein's philosophy describes a harmonic system, where order and truth illuminates the finitude of human life (Ales Bello, 2009, p. 10).

The word 'harmony', although not often used by Stein, seems appropriate in this instance: Ales Bello stresses Stein's capacity to investigate many different areas of knowledge and her particular sensitivity that allows her to have a special eye for all types of 'phenomena'. In the true spirit of the phenomenological approach, Stein's research attitude is characterised by a lack of preconception, an ability to 'wonder' and be impressed, without rhetoric, and with impressive realism and critical ability. In Stein there is no 'satisfaction of finding negative things, but instead a

great intellectual and moral effort to highlight what is positive, to search for balance, to search for harmony', this is particularly evident when considering the many dichotomies that are present in Stein's philosophical thought and that cooperate to build an honest but sympathetic ontology of the human person: body and soul, individual and community, male and female, faith and reason, philosophy and mystic.

The person that emerges from Stein's findings doesn't run from moment to moment like in Heidegger, but lives fully, experiences joy, learns and understands, builds connections to others that can be authentic and truthful, discovers itself through live experiences that change its personality and shapes its values, is open to the possibility of a life after death, to the idea of a loving giving being that supports its life and from whom it receives life itself. It is not just an idyllic portrait: in Stein there is a clear analysis of death, sufferance, decay and the human being is far from perfection and must work and learn to improve itself. But its death is not the last word, and neither is solitude, suffering or fear.

It is to these difficult aspects, Stein's understanding of death and suffering, that the analysis should now turn, to gain a complete picture of all aspects of human life.

4.5. Life and its ends: how do we experience death?

In the final section of this research I will discuss a particular issue related to Stein's critique of Heidegger: how and if we understand and

experience death. I argue that some of Stein's remarks are extremely fruitful for today's lively debate regarding the way that society should care for the ill, and especially the way that we should accompany and care for the terminally ill.

It is more and more often the case that modern medical treatments offer the possibility of prolonging life without providing a cure; and individuals, as well as practitioners and policy-makers, are faced with the decision of whether to withhold or withdraw treatment. There are many philosophical and ethical issues that are part of this dilemma, including the definition of human dignity; the need to respect the wishes of the patient and his or her family, and the necessity for the medical and nursing staff to care in a compassionate and sensitive way while remaining professionally efficient and law-abiding.

What follows are a few reflections about how to deal with the reality of death in the light of the Stein and Heidegger debate. I will consider: (4.5.1) Why does death represent a problem? (4.5.2) What is concerning and unique about the moment of passing? (4.5.3) How are we confronted with the death of others? (4.5.4) Why is it important and necessary to care for the dying?

4.5.1. The ambiguity of death

Let us start by considering how death is perceived and why this perception affects us. In a book centred on the interpretations of death in contemporary philosophy, Bernard Schumacher analyses the understanding of death in the works of, among others, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, and, most importantly, speculates whether death is regarded as a 'nothingness', in the epicurean sense, a necessary evil, or as something else entirely⁶⁴.

Epicurus famously regarded death as a 'nothingness' for the subject since it occurs after the end of human experience and therefore doesn't affect directly the human being - 'when we die, we no longer exist'. Schumacher introduces an interesting theory which in his view naturally progresses from this classical definition, the taboo of death, also referred to as 'the pornography of death': "public practices and discourse pertaining to death are no longer connected to the 'private' experience and feelings of those who die or are in mourning. [...] It has become rare to see someone die. People no longer die at home, but rather at the hospital; the dead are, in a way, excluded from the community of the living. [...] Death causes those who speak about it to shiver and to experience an uneasiness mingled with a fear of their own death or of the death of a loved one". While reflecting on these phenomena the author declares, "the human being is deprived of his

⁶⁴ Schumacher's book *Der Tod in der Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Darmstadt, 2004); English tr. *Death and Mortality in contemporary Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

death. We constantly lie to ourselves, saying that it is always someone else who dies, but never myself" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 2).

In the examples cited it is easy to see a recurrence of two main elements: the first is the fact that speaking of, or being in the face of death create uneasiness and makes people uncomfortable or afraid, which is the reason behind the fact that matters of death are normally dealt with only when it is imminent and in any case 'behind closed doors'. This proves that death is, in fact, regarded as a 'private' and 'personal' event, although it is preferred to delegate the care of all business related to it to professionals. Real death is preceded by social death, as the dying are confined in hospitals, care homes or special facilities. The second idea, only suggested, is that the human being that does not face the matter of his own death is missing something, is living in a sort of lie and is 'deprived of his death'. Both elements confirm the theory that death has to be regarded as an integral part of the human being, and the author rightly remarks on how early twentieth century philosophy, and particularly existentialism, were right in bringing the theme of death back to its centrality.

Schumacher specifically analyses Heidegger's ambiguity regarding the phenomenon of death in a similar way to that highlighted by Stein. Heidegger's main contradiction is, in fact, not dissimilar from what was highlighted above: death is presented as the most 'own' event for any person, it regards that person and nobody else, it is said to be an occurrence that should clarify the structure of the human being, but instead the only thing said about it is that the human being dies 'of' its mortality. Death does

not add to knowledge or to the life experience of the subject, in fact, we could say that the human being is in a way impaired by it, since it cannot learn anything about the phenomenon of death from the death of others and also cannot control or overcome its own death and satisfy its 'futural' structure, the fact that it is towards-its-future. Death is the limit of *Dasein's* future and care for the future and it puts an end to all possibilities.

This traces an impossible circle, as it has been highlighted in Stein's analysis of the 'being-toward-death', since death was described by Heidegger as a 'possibility', but instead reveals itself as "the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all. Death, as a possibility, gives *Dasein* nothing to be 'actualised', nothing that *Dasein* could itself become. It is the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing" (SZ, p. 307). In other words, in the moment of death the human being is reminded, in the most extreme and undeniable way, of its finitude.

4.4.2. Illness and deterioration

In criticizing Heidegger's theory of 'being-toward-death', Stein does not make any original statements in presenting death as a passage and a transformation, since this is also in line with her aim of reconciling with classical Christian philosophy: death as a natural passage, a substantial change of state for the human being, as the moment in which the bodily part ceases to exist while the soul is reconciled with the creator. However, in Stein's interpretation the human life, although limited and subjected to

deterioration, does not lose meaning or relevance: Stein criticized the description of life seen only as a progression toward death, a waiting for the end, and defends the idea of the moment of passing as the return to natural unity, describing it however as a release, a completion, a transition rather than an abrupt stop. What Stein's position can offer to the contemporary debate on death and dying is therefore this strong focus on the positivity and fullness of existence itself and, as a consequence, the fact that death, far from being a mere evil, is given back a sense and a meaning. She sees death not as separate from life but as a part of it.

What is striking about Stein is her great attention to the 'reality' of the moment of passing, an attention that no doubt derives from the phenomenological attitude of her evidence based analysis as well as from her ability to care for others and her attention to how people interact with each other. Also, as previously pointed out, Stein made use of her experience as a nurse in a military hospital during World War I, where she was confronted directly with the experience of death, and it is quite easy to imagine that such an experience was free from theoretical mediums and as crude and raw as a direct confrontation in these circumstances would have to be. The caducity and fragility of human life is expressed in Stein's full understanding of the human body, which has a very important and positive role: the human body is certainly considered to be the outer point of access to the soul, but is subject to decay, pain and death. Rightly Calcagno points out that there is an important difference between death and dying: while the first is an end of temporal existence, the latter is "a lived-experience; it can occur within consciousness, and insofar as it is a conscious-lived experience

we can re-present its content in consciousness, delivering a concrete description of its essence, especially as it plays itself out within our human existence” (Calcagno, 2008, p. 61).

Stein investigates intermediate states between ‘full-living’ and death, which she calls ‘the real experience of dying’ and disproves the ‘natural certainty of being’:

“These are first and foremost one’s own near-death states: severe illness, especially when it brings sudden or progressive deterioration of powers or the threat of immediate, violent death. Here is where the real experience of dying sets in, even if the end does not come in the cases where the danger passes. In severe illness, which brings us face to face with death, all ‘concern’ stops: all the things of this world, with which one has been concerned, lose importance and fade away completely from view. This also means a separation from all those who are still caught up in concern; one stops living in their world. Another care may replace it, as long as the inevitability is not yet understood or recognized: the exclusive care for one’s own body. But that will also end (even if it is possible that someone might stay prisoner to it and even be ‘surprised by death’ in the mist of it) and then there is finally only one important question: being or not-being? That being now in question is most certainly not ‘being-in-the-world’” (MHE, p. 76 – 77).

This is effectively a list of many different situations that could be described as ‘toward-death’. Stein even considers the possibility of a patient being a ‘prisoner’ of his own body, a remark that alludes to long term loss of consciousness, for example for patients in a comatose state. In front of such a varied list of possibilities that could preclude death, or at least bring the human person to doubt the certainty of his life, a common denominator can be identified: the fact that in none of these situations the person is actually fully ‘in-the-world’. In such a situation it is correct to speak of the end of social and bodily living, as the dying person loses the capability to act and

relate through its body. This is the case for most activities of everyday life, such as handling objects, engaging with things, knowing the world, communicate, and more generally 'being-with-others' (at least in the case of someone in a comatose state).

This is the main reason to postulate the possibility of a life that is not a bodily one and also not a social one but that still retains some aspects of the life of the soul. It is at any rate a 'personal' life, where both the psychic and the spiritual elements of the person are still present.

4.4.3. The death of others

To shed light onto the definition of death, Stein challenges Heidegger on the understanding of it. She focuses on the fairly provocative statement from *Being and Time*, that the human being cannot experience the death of others. She argues: 1) That there is a valid experience of the death of others that can be undergone; and 2) That this experience significantly adds to our understanding of the event of death in general and of our death in particular.

The first element to consider is that everybody is confronted, more or less directly, with an experience of death. If the doubtless knowledge that life one day will finish still doesn't concern us while we are young, 'a full human life implies an understanding of being which does not ignore the last things' (MHE, p. 77). In fact, many experiences speak in favour of it, the impression received from seeing someone die, above all, but also attending a funeral, witnessing the effect of the loss of a loved one in the actions of those

close to him. All these elements contribute to the idea of death and its consequences that take shape in our knowledge.

Stein goes on to describe the process of dying:

“The one who has once witnessed a difficult death is for always lost to the indifference of ‘one dies’. It is the powerful sundering of a natural unity. And when the struggle is over, then the human being, who has fought or in whom the fight has taken place, is no longer there. What is left is no longer ‘itself’. Where is it? Where is what made it into this human being? If we cannot give an answer to this question, the full meaning of death is not clear to us” (MHE, p. 78)⁶⁵.

She recognizes the unique character of each death: while some are a struggle and a fight, others may be a ‘mild falling asleep’, while one person may be scared and desperate, the other is calm and peaceful. What one death may testify is ‘in no way’ the same thing. However she focused on the state of deep peace that comes after death has occurred and wonders how ‘could the simple cessation of life, the transition from being to not being, bring forth such an impression?’ and moreover how the spirit, that ‘has impressed this seal in the body’ could simply not exist anymore (MHE, p. 78). In the search for evidence of the passage from one life to another life Stein describes the way that ‘the dying person is illuminated by another life in a manner visible to all who surround him’.

One might disagree with this description: although Stein rightly highlights the centrality of the ‘greatness’ and uniqueness of what’s happening, the fact that sometimes the dying person could raise its eyes as if

⁶⁵ I amended Lebech’s translation to match my undetermined use of the pronoun ‘it’ so far when it is referred to ‘human being’.

it is reaching out, or much more frequently the fact that an extreme peace and serenity seems to take hold and prepare them for the next step. While this description could certainly be fitting for some episodes, other cases see death happening surprisingly quickly or worryingly slowly, too painfully or brutally sudden. In all these cases it would be impossible to describe the person who is dying as peaceful, hopeful or prepared for what it is about to happen.

There is truth however in saying that the observer perceives the event as an exceptional moment, in good or bad, and can see the signs of a body that used to be 'full' with someone but is now a 'empty' shell. The correctness of this description, although quite basic, is perhaps the best evidence that allows one to describe the moment of the death of somebody as a transformation, the inevitable departure of that person from life as we know it. All these aspects stand out as a sharp contradiction to Heidegger's 'one dies' and the only element which may be saved from that interpretation should be the uniqueness of each death, and, it may be added, of each testimony of death.

Another important element is the fact that in considering the experience of death Heidegger doesn't take into sufficient account the possibility of a different form of being. Unlike Heidegger, Stein understands death as a passage, the entering into a different realm of being, and describes as objectively as possible the signs and the elements in support of this. She is clearly disappointed by the conclusion of Heidegger's analysis and this means that she has recognised in it the potential to come to a

different outcome. To express this Stein quotes her colleague and friend, the phenomenologist Hedwig Conrad-Martius, who describes Heidegger's reasoning as follows:

“as if a door, so long left unopened that it can hardly be opened anymore, is blown wide open with enormous strength, wise intention and unrelenting stamina, and then immediately closed again, bolted and so thoroughly blocked that any further opening seems impossible” (MHE, p. 81)⁶⁶.

Conrad-Martius refers here to Heidegger's ontology and the way he has posed again the question of the meaning of being only to avoid it in an even more determined manner and give full focus onto the facticity and temporality of the human being. Heidegger reopens a debate that has been left closed for a long time (locked by idealism, religion and subjectivism) but instead of offering the key to it, he closes it again with more force, so that it seems it will be impossible to reopen it.

One might draw a parallel between this image and Heidegger's attitude towards the matter of the end of life: he places the human being at the centre of his analysis but does not want to take into consideration that this being also has knowledge of other forms of beings around it and understanding of a higher being. He finally introduces the problem of death of the *Dasein* as the supposed phenomenon that can offer clarification for the *Dasein* itself, that allows the *Dasein* to be viewed at the highest point of its potential, only to throw it back onto itself, without any further

⁶⁶ Stein quotes from Hedwig Conrad Martius *Heideggers 'Sein und Zeit'* in Kunstwart (1933).

understanding or gain from the fact that its time comes to an end, with no hope of transformation or consolation.

There is no meaning in the death of the *Dasein*: it dies because it is temporal, it lives because it has to and it dies because its life comes to an end. The condition of 'being-toward-death' only provides a certain ambiguity as to whether the *Dasein* has the possibility of a being-after, however Heidegger fully clarifies that death is authentic and 'mine'. The condition of after life is simply not debated, neither is the evidence that the *Dasein* cares for its life and that this care and aspiration to prolong is in itself a reason to pose the question of what then?

The most important element in defence of the evidence that the death of others should be regarded as an experience that enlightens the nature of death itself is the fact that death is an event, which is experienced in terms of intersubjectivity and reciprocally through empathic representation (Calcagno, 2008, p. 65). When someone comes to terms with a loss, the experience shapes his or her future dealings and representation of death, may these be in terms of fear, anxiety, suffering, or, on the contrary, as peaceful and grateful. Furthermore from the experience of accompanying someone who is dying, carers experience what can offer comfort and reassurance, and what is instead futile, unhelpful, unnecessary or even cruel.

In an essay focused on the phenomenon of death in Stein's critique of Heidegger, Ken Casey comes to a similar conclusion as Calcagno, and highlights the communal nature of death, while demonstrating Heidegger's incongruence in his solipsistic view of dying:

“The force of the critique is to see all community as inauthentic and tranquilizing. This is where Stein’s critique is helpful. One of the curious aspects of the line of inquiry in the early sections of *Being and Time* is how being in its everydayness is ‘already always’ being with others. Mit-sein is part of the world. However, Heidegger may be taking a quick turn to a solipsistic account where the death and dying of others is removed from the meaning of one’s own being. In this regard, Stein’s focus on the communal nature of death and dying is a salutary correction to Heidegger” (Casey, 2012, p.13).

4.4.4. Terminal care

Modern medical technology offers many often miraculous ways to rescue, support and possibly extend human life. Nevertheless there is current acknowledgment of a point of no return, so-called ‘continuous’ or ‘permanent vegetative state’, a state that differs from the simple lack of awareness, where the chances of regaining consciousness are strongly diminished although the body may continue to perform simply mechanical actions that can offer an appearance of life⁶⁷.

The difficult decision in these cases for the doctors, carers and relatives of the patient is to determine when it is reasonable to give up hope, when the suffering is considered to be cruel and unbearable and where

⁶⁷ While in a vegetative state or a minimally conscious state a person can look awake but show minimal and fleeting evidence of awareness, an irreversible coma or persistent vegetative state (also called ‘brain death’) means a permanent unconscious condition, characterized by a complete loss of brain function while the heart continues to beat. This condition is incurable and irreversible and the patient has no reasonable probability of recovery. (“Irreversible brain damage and loss of brain function, as evidenced by cessation of breathing and other vital reflexes, unresponsiveness to stimuli, absence of muscle activity, and a flat electroencephalogram for a specific length of time. The legal definition of this condition varies from state to state”. See ‘Irreversible coma’, Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition, (Online) 2003.

medical aid cannot mitigate it anymore, and, in some cases, release the person from an artificial state of life. In other words one is called to determine what are the criteria that characterise a living person and when these are no more present. What is then the main element that promotes a living body to be a 'person'? What is the appropriate care and way to accompany someone toward the end? These and other similar questions populate newspapers, ethical conferences and governmental debates and are not dissimilar to the difficulties in the background of Stein's approach to the problem of death.

Stein's thoughts offer a few interesting remarks with regards to how to care for people during serious (terminal) illness. In *Finite and Eternal Being*, while describing the interconnection between form and matter and particularly Aristotle's idea of active and passive potency, Stein offers an explanatory example related to medical care:

"Being cured takes place in the patient who is getting well. However, medical art as the power of healing which produces that 'movement' [a change of movement in one thing which is originated by another thing or power] has its being not in the patient, but in the physician. [...] But the art of medicine does not by itself suffice to bring about the cure: in addition there must be in the patient the power of capability of getting well or of being cured. While the former is a *power of doing or acting* [*actio*], the latter is a *power of suffering* [*passio*] or of being acted upon (active and passive potency). (EES, p. 176)

With this description Stein defends Aristotle's theory that the capability or 'potentiality' of something is rooted in the matter and that although the activation of said capability has to come from an external force, the participation of the one that this force is applied upon is absolutely

central for it to fully operate. This theory is well fitting with everything that was said about how outside forces can impress and change the human soul and how the soul welcomes such impressions. In the same way Stein described the action of the eternal being and the response of the temporal being to this action.

In a previously quoted passage it was highlighted how the depth of the human soul remains mysterious for human understanding until its full capability is required, and Stein also remarks on the fact that “what human beings are ‘capable of doing’ as free persons they learn only by doing it or, perhaps, in anticipation, when they meet with a specific demand” (EES, p. 376). This observation could well describe how one person can find an inner strength, perhaps more than reasonably expected, to deal with a difficult situation. It is often said that someone’s inner motivation and strength can make a large difference to recovery but how much truth is there in this affirmation? More importantly can an active and open participation of the patient help a situation where full recovery is no longer an option?

Stein’s remarks can be effectively applied to the relationship that takes place between a doctor and the patient. Just like in all other forms of ‘response’ Stein rightly stresses the interconnection between the powers of acting and being acted upon. In fact one cannot be without the other. A patient that works well with their doctor, who is not forced into being cured, will live the experience of being cured in a better way than someone that sees a therapy as an imposition, also a doctor will benefit from a co-operative patient who will facilitate their job and not impede it. However,

there is more: according to what is stated above, to cure someone must necessarily mean to ask and to implement their response to the cure, regardless of realistic outcomes. It must be a joint experience, a co-operation between those who can provide such care and those who must not fight it but welcome it and from their part do whatever is in their power to let it operate to the best of its potential.

This is not always easy; in fact many of today's criticisms and improvements related to medical care often are about patients wishing for a better understanding of the decision-making process and a more sympathetic and personal relationship with nurses and doctors. A small example can be offered by the debate generated in the UK around the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP), a set of guidelines for doctors and medical staff to regulate the palliative care of the terminally ill. It was introduced in England from 1990 and, after an initial positive response, was heavily criticised and is currently set to be phased out and substituted with more general guidance based on agreed principles to support individualised care rather than a set of indiscriminate rules⁶⁸.

Although the LCP was initially recommended as a model of best practice by the Department of Health and has been adopted in many UK hospitals and other healthcare settings, the protocol was shown to have been badly implemented, meaning that decisions were often taken for reasons that were not related to the well-being of the patient. Heavy

⁶⁸ Online source:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/212450/Liverpool_Care_Pathway.pdf

criticism by patients and their relatives argued that people were put on the pathway without their consent, and that death was hastened in people who were not dying imminently. Furthermore it was argued that it is often impossible for doctors to predict when death is imminent, so the decision to put a patient on the pathway was made without a solid foundation, or worse, for financial and / or organisational reasons. A predominant criticism was that the withdrawal of life support cannot be regulated by a set rule, but must be judged on a case-by-case basis and always in the best interests of the patient⁶⁹.

Despite one of the aims of the LCP being the importance of good communication between medical staff and the patient and their family, this seems to be the biggest point of concern. The experience and review of the LCP has proved that it is essential to include the patient and his or her family in the decision-making process as much as the circumstances allow it. Along with the lack of explanations for the patient's questions or concerns, families also complained that the psychological, social and spiritual care of the patient along with their wishes were not always considered, and full priority was given to treatment.

It is impossible to analyse such a complicated matter in this short space of my thesis, however this discussion offers a valid example of how difficult a closeness of intent and effort between doctor and patient, as highlighted in the previous paragraph, can be. How can the dignity and

⁶⁹ Online source: <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2012/11November/Pages/What-is-the-Liverpool-Care-Pathway.aspx>

safety of the human person be at the core of medical care without an unconditional trust from the side of the patient towards those who have the authority to act to preserve their life? More importantly what are the consequences of dealing with the (end of) life of someone without their best interests at heart?

An interesting answer has been offered by a recent review of the LCP carried on by a Christian panel of researchers working on the ethics of clinical care and practice⁷⁰. This review states that the LCP was not necessarily wrong but mostly wrongly applied and raises awareness of the fact that if nothing similar was to replace it, it could lead to a deterioration of communication with those who are dying with those close to them. Most importantly, the review argues that, if the protocol is wrongly applied, people who are not imminently dying may have their deaths 'hastened by inappropriate treatment or withdrawal of treatment' once the pathway is commenced.

This confirms the fear that one's death may be hastened and that the person will not have enough time to prepare or to come to terms with it. Undeniably a dying person would like to understand what is going on and maintain the capability to decide what can be controlled, as far as possible; this is a desire that is embedded in the core of the human being who finds it

⁷⁰ *Anscombe Bioethics Centre Response to The Independent Review of The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP)*, 9 September 2013 by the Director and the Governing Board. Online Source: <http://bioethics.org.uk/anscombestatementonlcpandneuberger.pdf>

difficult to let go, as it was highlighted by Stein, and that at the same time shows how the person is far from being 'indifferent' to the end of its life and would wish for it to continue. Most importantly the patient and his or her close family are afraid of being 'robbed' of the experience of death, which, however difficult and painful, is necessary and irreplaceable. One wants to 'be there' with the dying one, despite the pain. It is an experience that needs all the time that one can get to deal, understand and, as far possible, come to terms the situation, if not for the patient themselves, certainly for those next to them.

This assertion must be, of course, put into context, since each process towards death and the way one lives through it is unique: there are, of course, cases where the difficult decision to withdraw medical support is taken after long deliberation, in agreement with the next of kin and with respect for the dignity of the person. This testifies furthermore to the absolute centrality of a trustful attitude and an open discussion between all parties involved. A 'hurried' death inevitably leads to an impersonal death; a jumping ahead to what is bound to happen.

4.4.5. Final remarks

We may conclude by saying that although nobody could put themselves completely 'in the shoes' of the one who is dying, the experience of accompanying and supporting someone through this path definitely adds to one's knowledge and understanding of the process and the moment of dying. This experience is far from being the cold witnessing of an event but is instead a living participation.

In the light of Stein's analysis it has been possible to identify a few elements how death is experienced, in particular the fact that the fear of dying affects all human beings *especially* because they don't want to relinquish life. In this sense the understanding of death belongs to the understanding of life itself, and the experience of death shouldn't be hidden and discarded as a mere medicalised matter but should regain its humanity. Stein is perhaps wrong in presenting a peaceful image of the moment of passing; also not everybody will accept the idea of death as a passage to another state. However it is important to highlight that it is an event that matters and touches profoundly the dying and the living alike because is in fact experienced in a communal way.

Furthermore it is to be desired that those who professionally assist the ill and are called to support them to the end of their life could keep the wellbeing of that person and will of knowing above any other priority. The dying process needs time and shouldn't be unnecessary shortened or hastened. A dying person and his family should be put in a position to talk

about what is happening, to trust their doctor and feel motivated to actively participate in their care as a collaborative enterprise.

The trustful and open acceptance of being helped and being cured, along with a positive informed response in terms of strength, hope and courage must be evoked from the core of the patient. This may not suffice to save their life, but it will at least help towards making the experience of their death a personal one.

Conclusions

I have argued that Stein offers a distinctive philosophical approach that responds to and augments Heidegger's views on the nature of the human being. She challenges Heidegger's answers by asking questions that relate to basic human experiences (life, death, fear, care). I have assessed how both authors start from the same set of questions at the beginning of their work, and I have argued this is the result of influences from phenomenology and Christian metaphysics. This proximity and shared point of view makes Stein's critique even more remarkable, because of the almost diametrically opposed religious, historical and political development of their lives (Stein's conversion to the Catholic Church, her failure to obtain a prestigious academic position and her death at Auschwitz; opposed to Heidegger's move out of the Catholic tradition, his academic rise to fame and his collaboration with the Nazi regime). Aside from the biographical details, it is my opinion that Stein successfully contributes to a fruitful debate about Heidegger's work and reads it with intellectual honesty, despite the fact that she conducts her analysis whilst remaining open to revealed truths *of faith*. I have also argued that without the initial explication of Heidegger's philosophy of existence Stein's further development of the idea of the human person would not have been as striking and thought provoking as it is.

The main findings of this research work can be recapitulated as follows:

- **The methodological critique**

Stein argues that Heidegger maintains his analysis on a level that is strictly “of this world” (MHE, p. 75), not only by concentrating his remarks on the structure of Dasein but also by avoiding two crucial questions: the question of the origin of the Dasein, and the question of being after death. Heidegger’s position is even more difficult to understand since he devotes a large part of the introductory sections of *Being and Time* to highlighting the fact that contemporary philosophy had forgotten the fundamental question of the meaning of being and that this question remains the main task of a pure ontological philosophical investigation. He offers further detailed criticism of the theories offered by personalism, philosophical anthropology and theology, when these have attempted a structural understanding of the human being.

I argue we must be impressed by the rigour of Stein’s methodological approach, as her critique arises from her observation that Heidegger’s argument fails to fulfil his main premises, which is that the analysis of *Dasein* should be the preparation for a more general and informed analysis of being, which is never actually offered. Moreover, he states that the main aim of his work is to ask correctly the question of being; but he ultimately fails to ask any related questions and therefore can only arrive at a tautological investigation, where his conclusion is identical to his starting point, i.e. the temporality of being.

- **The partiality of Heidegger's description of the human being and the coincidence of essence and existence is brought into question**

Stein is not completely negative about the structure of the *Dasein* as presented by Heidegger, in fact she recognises positive elements in the concept of *Befindlichkeit* and in the existential character of the human being. She describes Heidegger's investigation as "accurate in a certain sense, in [the sense namely] that it reveals something of the basic constitution of the human being, and sketches a certain way of being human with great clarity" (MHE, p. 81). What Stein criticises is the fact that Heidegger's description is partial and incomplete because the investigation halts "in surprising ways ... in front of references which present themselves in a direct and imperious manner" (MHE, p. 70). Specifically, Heidegger's analysis does not cover the totality of the human being, particularly concerning the failure to identify the psychosomatic being and the rejection of the traditional distinction of essence and existence. Heidegger's reason for rejecting this distinction does not seem to be rooted in an ontological system independent of human existence, but mostly to be motivated by his methodological choice to avoid the way followed by traditional Christian metaphysics. Furthermore he does not manage to completely reconcile the fact that the human being has a certain understanding of eternal being, unlimited time and truth, all elements that should lead to theorise the possibility of beings different from human beings and the relationship between temporal being and eternal being. Finally he fails to give any life-like character to the human being, which should naturally follow from his findings, at least as a postulate: for

instance it is not stated that the *Dasein* does not have a body, however he chose not to discuss this. In a similar vein, the description of the everydayness of the *Dasein* and its *mit-sein* could have opened the way to an analysis of inter-subjectivity, however both phenomena are only depicted in their 'degraded' form, as Stein highlights: "the description of 'everyday' being is ambiguous, as it comes close to the mistaken affirmation that community life as such is 'deteriorated', and that 'authentic' being means lonely being, whereas in fact both solitary and community life have their authentic and deteriorated forms" (MHE, p. 81).

Although it is correct to say that Heidegger's analysis is far from the real aspects of the life of the human being, one might say that Stein is too oriented towards social and anthropological interests, which play a large part in her remarks. The main point of the critique has to be found in the fact that Heidegger's analysis portrays *a* type of human being and *some* aspect of its life, but not the entirety of it.

- **The opposition of the *Dasein*'s 'thrownness' to Stein's idea of 'feeling secure-in-being'**

Stein's demand that there must be a higher being which is in full possession of its being, and that throws the *Dasein* into being, is solidly based on traditional metaphysics. This is not the only reason in support of Stein's criticism, but there is no element in Heidegger's investigation to explain the whereabouts of *Dasein*, neither is *Dasein* described as able to throw itself forth (far from it, it is repeatedly stated that it is not in possession of its being). Stein's demand for further explication is justified,

and so is the question of 'why' the human being is thrown into existence. In this work I have presented one possible theory, which is the one Stein outlines in opposition to Heidegger's 'thrownness'; her concept of '*Geschöpflichkeit*', i.e. 'to be held/ to be secure-in-being'. In her investigation Stein presents the human being as being placed in existence by a higher being which is *a se*, immutable, autonomous and necessary, she states that the human being has an understanding of this being because it is in touch with the fullness of being throughout its finite life.

The idea of security in being contains this important element, the serenity of 'being looked after', the confidence that arises from the knowledge of being supported, which are all elements that are in strong contrast with Heidegger's existential anguish. Stein further describes being itself as being received by the human being: this offers a very interesting element for our analysis of Stein's ontology of the human person, since to rephrase Heidegger's thesis, the 'thrower' now becomes the 'giver'. In this way, though the acceptance of the gift of being, both the giver and the receiver acquire a clear ontological consistence. The receiver is characterised by the intrinsic openness and trust that are necessary in order to receive the gift of being, and in the same way the giver can be ascribed the fullness, love and pure openness that belong to this state.

- **The centrality of solitude, fear and the absence of an authentic interpersonal life in Heidegger's depictions of human existence**

Stein demonstrates great appreciation for Heidegger's detailed description of the everydayness of the *Dasein*, she however, also criticises

the isolated and schizophrenic image of human being that emerges from it. Because of its impossibility of reaching any authenticity and long-lasting awareness and the incapacity of experiencing true being, Stein calls Heidegger's description of *Dasein* a caricature "despite it being elucidated in its ultimate depths. The exposition is not only defective and incomplete – because it wants to understand being without reference to essence and sticks to a particular way of being – it is also deceptive in regard to its subject-matter, because it isolates this from the totality of ontological relations to which it belongs, and thus cannot reveal its true meaning" (MHE, p. 81).

In conclusion, once again Heidegger is seen to be working on certain aspects of the human being and of human life that are chosen to support his premises but he does not offer a complete picture in his account, according to Stein.

- The limited interpretation of the phenomenon of death offered by Heidegger and his refusal to consider the possibility of being-after-death

This is one of the deepest and most thought-provoking aspects of Stein's analysis of Heidegger, and has been debated in only a few critical works so far⁷¹. Stein's analysis shows how Heidegger's introduces the problem of death as supposedly the phenomenon that can offer clarification for the *Dasein* itself, only to throw it back onto itself, without any further

⁷¹ See: 1.5. Literature Review, p. 15.

understanding or gain from the fact that its time comes to an end, with no hope of passage, transformation or consolation. The condition of after life is not questioned or debated, neither is the evidence that the *Dasein* cares for its life and why that is.

The main thrust of Stein's objections is that she sees most of Heidegger's statements negated by the simple evidence of everyday life. In this sense she refuses to recognise 'anguish' and 'care' as the only constitutive elements of human being; she defends the fact that any human being wonders about what will be of it after-death as well as during (not necessarily with fear but also for curiosity), and she describes signs and evidence of the fullness of being, the eternity to which the human soul is called upon, which is evident both inside the person and around it.

In my findings I have outlined the two main consequences that can be extrapolated from Stein's philosophy of the human person, and applied them in a contemporary context for today's ethical debate.

The first one is Stein's remark on the freedom and active participation of the human person to make possible the action of a higher force. Through her critique of the *Dasein* and the description of the human person originating from an eternal one, Stein succeeds in giving authenticity and freedom to the person, who is in charge of its own destiny when it comes to decide to open itself to the possibility that its life is something more than just existence. It is in the moment of acceptance of other beings

that one can build true connections, and it is in the sincere recognising of one's strength and of the security of being 'supported' that life acquires depth and foundation, in the surrendering to the joyful acceptance of the gift of being that one can touch the true mystery of existence. If the ultimate ground of the human person is ineffable, it cannot be processed and understood rationally; on the contrary it is something that is received and accepted: a gift of revealed truth, which presupposed an opening toward it, a 'being seized' by someone or something else. Stein's understanding of the human person celebrates human freedom and search for truth, but also the joyful recognition and discovery of it and the calm and trustful moment of being secure and at peace in the knowledge of being loved.

The second important conclusion is the positive and truly enriching description of the end of life and of how the moment of the end, far from being an invalidation of life, puts human existence into the context of a wider horizon. In the difficult moment of separation from the finitude of one's life, one encounters a support that reminds one of its uniqueness and that offers hope, security, strength and meaning. Far from being a mundane and mechanical matter, dying can be approached in the medical care profession as the time when one can appeal to the deepest strength and value of the human person.

In a society where one's death is often preceded by social death, isolation, and by the medicalisation of care, people are often called upon to make an informed decision about their (or their loved one's) end-of-life moment, but they are often denied the time to come to terms with it.

Recognising that the moment of passing is an essential part of life itself could help patients and doctors to keep respect for life at the heart of care, and respect the spiritual and decisional needs of the patient. Being included in the decision-making process, as far as the law allows, can help the dying to return sense and meaning to the end of his or her life. The person, not the treatment, must be central in this process, and this can only happen when the patient is not needlessly deprived of the experience of death, however difficult and painful this may be.

Stein's final judgment on the matter of what Heidegger's view of the human being is, is as follows: "There is of course much more to say about Heidegger's analysis of being. But we have come far enough to answer the question of whether it is accurate" (MHE, p. 81). What Heidegger has described does not do justice to the complexity, beauty and potential of the human being as it really is. In the final analysis Heidegger's philosophy turns out to imply inhumanity, solitude and death, and as such could not possibly be more opposed to Stein's.

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

EDITH STEIN'S CRITIQUE OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER:

BACKGROUND, REASONS AND SCOPE

LIDIA RIPAMONTI

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