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PHENOMENOLOGY, HUMAN BEING, TRUTH AND SOCIETY IN THE PANORAMA OF EDITH STEIN

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Abstract

Phenomenology for Edith Stein is closely linked to man and society. His inquisitive character, instigated by his master Edmund Husserl, brings to light the intricacies of society and that man is an automaton, even if rational, through the methods applied, to knowledge and truth. Phenomenology, Ontology and Metaphysics were essential for Stein to follow the paths of immutable truth, on which she applied Phenomenology as an investigative method in the conception of the essences of the Human Being, as a man inserted in a community, as a Finite Being and a Divine Being.

Keywords: *Phenomenology, Human Being, truth, society.*

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INTRODUCTION

In the prologue of her work *Science of the Cross*, when referring to her specific approach regarding Saint John of the Cross, we find a kind of personal reference that gives meaning to the journey of searches undertaken by Edith Stein throughout her life; the philosopher says: "... and in this search for meaning, what the author believes she has understood about the laws of being and spiritual life prevails during the efforts made throughout her life."³ The expression "in the course of the efforts made during his life" is significant. The point of arrival, represented by this which is his last work, requires not only a starting point, but also a reference point that presents itself as a base, to give meaning, to the whole of his way of thinking. Phenomenology is, without a doubt, this fundamental basis. In this first part of the work we intend to explore a kind of osmosis that marks all of Edith Stein's thought, namely, that between life and phenomenology, to the point of admitting that hers is a phenomenological life. But how to recover this particularity?

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF EDMUND HUSSERL AS A STARTING POINT

The genesis of a philosophical modernity goes back to the work of Descartes. The model of rationality he designed reaches its climax in the later constructions of both Kant and Hegel. One of its most significant marks can be found in the constant and decisive division between subject and object as a condition for the foundation of science that will be established on the performances of positivism born from the works of Auguste Comte. The primacy of the autonomous subject over an inert, mathematically established and calculated object also drew the course and meanings of the sciences that appeared from the 18th century onwards, such as Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, etc. It was with this spirit of a philosophical Enlightenment that the contours of a supposed autonomy of man as an individual inserted in a society were traced. These two elements - individual and society - constitute the mark of anthropological and social modernity always present in the production that diversified between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Truth could not be founded on such essences, but should now be constructed as a creative work of the reason of an emancipated subject, guided by a good method in paths very well ordered in such a way that, in the end, the clarity and distinction of ideas were affirmed. This project, expressed in Descartes' masterpiece *Discourse on Method*, is, in Lima Vaz's conviction, "without a doubt one of the three or four foundational texts of all Western thought".⁴

It is, still, Lima Vaz who places us before the most decisive constitutive elements of the Cartesian enterprise. In it are defined the fundamental roles of the autonomous subject, society, method, and truth in the face of the world. This is how the author expresses himself:

Reading Descartes' *Discourse on Method* shows in what sense one should interpret the Cartesian novelty in the adoption of the so-called 'mechanistic' paradigm in the

broad sense, whose coordinates will circumscribe the space of modern Philosophy and Ethics. It is necessary to represent it in opposition to the 'organicist' paradigm of ancient Philosophy. In this, the construction of the System presupposes the given order of the universe. In that, the construction of the System, obeying the rules of the method, generates the order, totally transparent to the reason that constructed it. From here the founding priority of I think, the necessary connection between evidence and truth, and the sequence of the order of reasons crowned by Ethics.⁵

It did not take long for the effects of this procedure to be felt. It was Edmund Husserl, with his work situated between the years that marked the end of the 19th century and those that opened the 20th century, one of the pioneers to reflect on what he identified as the Crisis of modern science.⁶

Phenomenology will assert itself as a counterpart to the reductionist experience of modern science. There is in it a fundamental inversion that shifts the attention dedicated to the process of experience. While in the modern enterprise the focus was directed to the object that is experienced, now, attention is directed to the way it is done, that is, the way this experience is processed by the subject. In this regard, Cerbone expresses himself⁷:

... To focus our attention not so much on what we experience out there in the world, but on our experience of the world, is to take the first step in the practice of phenomenology. The word phenomenology means the study of 'phenomena', hence the notion of phenomenon and the notion of experience, in general, coincide. Therefore, paying attention to the experience instead of what is experienced is paying attention to the phenomena.

Husserl's work originates in the so-called anti-psychologistic controversy. Two works cover the extent of the founding act of phenomenology as a critique of the naturalization, and therefore, of the scientification of consciousness; they are *Logical Investigations*⁸ *Philosophy as the science of rigor*⁹.

The desire to know responsibly cannot be achieved if there is a reduction of existence to only natural facts. A naturalistic protocol has been drawn up in the certainty that the world could be reduced to what we think of it, which is equivalent to believing that reality has an identification with the representations we make of it. Husserl highlights the naivety of naturalism when he states: "By its

⁵ LIMA VAZ, H. C. *Escritos de filosofia IV: introdução à ética filosófica* 1. P. 279 – 280.

⁶ HUSSERL, Edmund. *A crise das ciências europeias e a fenomenologia transcendental*. Tradução de Diogo Falcão Ferrer. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2012.

⁷ CERBONE, David. *Fenomenologia*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2012, p.13.

⁸ HUSSERL, Edmund. *Investigações Lógicas*. Segundo Volume, parte II. *Investigações para a fenomenologia e a Teoria do Conhecimento*. Lisboa: Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa, 2007b.

⁹ HUSSERL, Edmund. *A filosofia como ciência de rigor*. 2. ed. Coimbra: Biblioteca Filosófica, 1965.

³ STEIN, Edith. *Obras completas vol. V (Escritos Espirituales)* p. 202

⁴ LIMA VAZ, H. C. *Escritos de filosofia IV: introdução à ética filosófica* 1. P. 281.

starting points, all natural science is naive. For it, the Nature it seeks to investigate simply exists. The existence of things – static, moving, variable, in infinite space, and temporal, in infinite time – is understood immediately”.¹⁰

In this regard, Husserl emphasizes that phenomenology, as he conceives it, "...gives access to the "sources" from which the fundamental concepts and ideal laws of pure logic "spring", sources to which they must, again, be returned, if we want to obtain the clarity and distinction that is demanded "[...]" Thus Husserl expresses himself regarding the independence between Philosophy and Psychology in his creation:

Pure Phenomenology represents a domain of neutral investigations, in which different sciences have their roots. On the one hand, it serves Psychology as an empirical science. In its intuitive and pure procedure, it analyzes and describes, in an essential generality – especially as phenomenology of thought and knowledge –, the representative, judicative, and cognitive experiences, which, empirically apprehended as classes of real events within the framework of natural animal effectiveness, Psychology submits to scientific investigation in the element of experience. .¹¹

Thus, the so-called objectivity of the world is not constituted by the result of an "empirical self", but by intentional consciousness within the scope of the lived. This is the reason why consciousness cannot be reduced to certain natural properties, its effectiveness does not occur outside experiences, since, in itself, it is nothing as stated by Husserl: "[...] consciousness itself is the complex of experiences. But the world is never an experience of the thinking being. Experience is to aim at the world, the world itself is the intended object".¹²

Without the apparatus that can ground knowledge, the natural sciences are not capable of producing evidence about reality. In this sense, Husserl intends that phenomenology provide an epistemological basis to which "empirical sciences must resort to find their definitive foundation." It is not possible in Husserl's understanding that any knowledge be made available under the aegis of given concepts without the radical question of their meaning. Thus the philosopher expresses himself:

...she must arrive at the systems of concepts that define the fundamental meaning of all scientific domains. These are the concepts that initially draw the lines of demarcation in the formal idea of a universe of possible existence in general and, consequently, also in that of a possible world in general. They must therefore be the true fundamental concepts of all sciences.¹³

It is by this condition that the so-called ontological regions are distinguished, which house on the one hand being as

consciousness, and on the other, being as reality. The method of phenomenological reduction is another constitutive element. Establishing itself in three stages, namely, the epoche¹⁴.

Consciousness plays a decisive role because it is what constitutes all knowledge. In this regard, Husserl clarifies:

Only a radical retrospective questioning by the subjectivity (...) ultimately generating all the validity of the world with its content, in all its modes, scientific and pre-scientific, as well as by the what and how of the achievements of reason – only such questioning can make objective truth and reach the ultimate meaning of the being of the world. That is, the first in itself is not the being of the world in its unquestioned obviousness, and one should not merely raise the question about what objectively belongs to it; the first in itself is, on the contrary, subjectivity and, in fact, subjectivity as naively pre-giving the being of the world and, then, as that which rationalizes or, what is the same: which objectifies.¹⁵

The second deficiency stems from the fact that there is a belief, among its defenders, that objective science has the capacity to meet all the aspirations of science. In this regard, and conversely, Husserl expresses that the so-called world of life (Lebenswelt) precedes any and all theoretical formulation and, for this reason, it cannot be reduced to any science, as the author expresses: "An objective theory in its logical sense (...) is rooted in the world of life, is founded on it, on the original evidences that are part of it".¹⁶

PHENOMENOLOGY

During his time in Breslau, Stein may have attended classes with William Stern (1871 – 1938) and through them, he became closer to Psychology. In the four semesters he took, he developed a conviction that he had found the solution to his questions. However, very quickly he realized, thanks to his sharp spirit, the deficiencies of this science, mainly regarding the question of foundations; she clarifies: "all my studies convinced me that this science was just crawling: that it lacked the necessary foundation and that it was incapable, by itself, of elaborating them".

The process of academic distancing between Edith Stein and Edmund Husserl is presented by her as follows:¹⁷, in a letter to Roman Ingarden dated February 28th 1918:

Deep down, what I can't stand is the idea of being at someone's beck and call. I can put myself at the service of a cause and do it in many ways out of love for someone. But, in short, to be at the service of a person just to obey them, that I truly cannot do. And, if Husserl doesn't get used to treating me like a true collaborator, as I've always perceived our relationship and as he himself, in theory, also perceives it, then the only way is for us to separate.

¹⁰ HUSSERL, Edmund. *A filosofia como ciência de rigor*. P. 14

¹¹ HUSSERL, Edmund. *Investigações Lógicas. Segundo Volume, parte I. Investigações para a Fenomenologia e a Teoria do Conhecimento*. P. 27

¹² HUSSERL, Edmund. *Investigações Lógicas. Segundo Volume, parte I. Investigações para a Fenomenologia e a Teoria do Conhecimento*. P.422

¹³ HUSSERL, Edmund. *Méditations Cartésiennes*. Traduit par Gabrielle Pfeiffer et Emmanuel Lévinas. p. 131 -132.

¹⁴ MARTINI, Renato da S. *A fenomenologia e a época*. Revista Trans/Form/Ação. São Paulo, 21/22. 1998/1999.

¹⁵ HUSSERL, Edmund. *A crise das ciências europeias e a fenomenologia transcendental*. p. 55.

¹⁶ HUSSERL, Edmund. *A crise das ciências europeias e a fenomenologia transcendental*. p. 105.

¹⁷ STEIN, Edith. *Obras Completas*. Vol I. p. 604.

The breakdown of the relationship was exclusively academic, as Stein always maintained a special admiration for his master. The mark of phenomenology, especially its methodological particularity, was indelibly imprinted on his soul and foundation, including his later works, such as *The Structure of the Human Person*, where a phenomenological anthropology is found with mastery.

The particularity of Phenomenology in Edith Stein stems from Husserl's assumed conviction that it is the path to the return to things themselves. This return is a kind of commitment to the necessary location of the foundations of all knowledge. Considering the limits of the sciences and previous devices, as indicated above by Husserl, it was necessary that the investigation of phenomena take seriously the question of founding experiences in the always necessary and fundamental relation that involves both the identity of the subject and that of the object. In this way, no knowledge could be taken as rigorous without this essential return to things themselves.

This methodological conviction assumed by Stein since Husserl presents, however, a challenging problem, namely, that of knowing to what kind of things phenomenology must turn, in this way, to an ontology. What are the things themselves to which one must return? There seems to be an agreement between Stein and Husserl. In the philosopher's works, it is evident that such things themselves are not summarized to those that result from the perceptual contents of experience, but to its essence, that is, to their meaning detached. Stein assumes from Husserl the notion of essence that he had established - this would be: "that which is found in the Being of the individual as it is"¹⁸.

Taking this into account, Stein acknowledges that Husserl had created a method for the objective analysis of essences and phenomenology would circumscribe an eidetic descriptive contribution, which means that its commitment is to the reach of any and all essences that show themselves in consciousness. Thus, it was positioned Husserl¹⁹ "Pure or transcendental phenomenology will not be founded as a science of facts, but as a science of essences (as an 'eidetic' science).

The capture of such essences must be made possible by the appropriate method, for looking at the essence places us before a new object that cannot be shown by sensitive perception. For this to be possible, according to both Husserl and Stein, we must make use of the contemplation of essences or, in other words, of intuition. In this aspect, we identify what is fundamental for Edith Stein: the phenomenological method has an intuitive character.

This conviction, particularly in the philosopher, arises from her recognition that Phenomenology is not a deductive procedure since it does not maintain affinities and dependencies on a set of undemonstrable principles. Similarly, it does not establish itself as an inductive procedure since it does not aim to establish universal truths starting from particular propositions as claimed by the natural sciences. Discarding both the deduction that requires universal generalizations and the induction that demands particular evidence, Stein reached the core of her phenomenological perspective, that is, phenomenology as a suitable method for

establishing essences presupposes intuition. Only intuition can confront us with philosophical truths in their expression of infinitude, immutability, and evidence. Thus, the philosopher expresses herself regarding intuition²⁰:

Intuition is not just the sensitive perception of a determined and particular thing, such as it is here and now. There is an intuition of what the thing is by essence, and this can have a double meaning: what a thing is by its own being and what it is by its universal essence. (If these two meanings refer to objectively different things, and if this occurs in all fields or only in some, that is something we need a long discussion about).

In her work "*What is Phenomenology*"²¹, Stein makes an X-ray of certain positions in course at the time that are, in her understanding, laden with errors and strives, with effort, to clarify their evident obscure aspects. From her analyses emerge, basically, three themes/problems, which are: the objectivity of consciousness, intuition as a method, and the question of idealism in which she discusses what she identifies as the idealist turn of Husserl.

What Stein seeks to define for phenomenology is that it is a philosophy that makes efforts to recover absolute truth and the objectivity of consciousness, thus distancing itself from initiatives that are markedly focused on experience and those that cannot break free from relativism (one could notably point to both naturalism and psychologism, as well as historicism). Beyond these initiatives, Stein holds the certainty that phenomenology has as its mission the recovery of immutable truth and that our task is not to produce truth, but to find it, since it is evident and is already there.

The truth, according to Edith Stein, must be absolute, since in its mutable sense it could only produce partialities and, in this way, inevitable relativism finds its fertile ground. It is for this reason that in the philosopher, phenomenology, established in opposition to all relativisms, commits itself to investigative rigor as had been pointed out by her teacher Edmund Husserl in his 1911 article *Philosophy as a Science of Rigor*²².

Dedicating herself to the objectivity of consciousness and intuition, Stein gradually migrates to what would be the culminating point in the sense of reaching the end of her philosophical trajectory. After her approach to Catholicism (around 1922), Theology also becomes part of the author's concerns. Thus, an intense dedication is present, particularly regarding the scholastic thought found, above all, in the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Edith Stein, at this moment, establishes, definitively, an innovative way that brings together, integrating, phenomenology and scholasticism. Throughout her last works, she promotes a fertile dialogue between the two types of thought, a task that can be observed in *The phenomenology of Husserl and the Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas*²³. This work highlights the way in which

²⁰ STEIN, Edith. *A estrutura da pessoa humana*. Obras completas. P. 591.

²¹ STEIN, Edith. *Obras completas*. Vol III páginas 149 ss.

²² HUSSERL, Edmund. *A Filosofia como Ciência de Rigor*. Coimbra: Atlântida. 1965.

²³ STEIN, Edith. *La fenomenología de Husserl, y la filosofía de Santo Tomás de Aquino*. Obras Completas, vol. III, p. 195ss.

¹⁸ HUSSERL, Edmund. *Ideias para uma Fenomenologia pura e uma filosofia fenomenológica*. tomo I p. 35

¹⁹ HUSSERL, Edmund. *Ideias para uma fenomenologia pura e para uma filosofia fenomenológica*. P. 28.

the philosopher separates²⁴ the philosophy; on one hand, that marked by the scholastic tradition and, on the other, the one identified as modern reaching its peak of development in the elaborations of Kant. Stein bears the acknowledgment of a true abyss separating the two endeavors to such an extent that Catholics cannot engage in dialogue with modernity, nor can the moderns maintain a dialogue with them.

The Steinian intent is to overcome such fragmentation and, now, phenomenology has this additional task, which is to enable dialogue between the two theoretical fields. Here lies, without a doubt, the decisive contribution of the author in the renewal of the phenomenology inherited from Husserl, and which will be crucial for the development of an attention directed toward the human being who lives his dimension of relationship with others. For the composition of a Philosophical Anthropology that accounts for the Person and the community, it is essential to revisit the questions that involve Ontology and Metaphysics.

ONTOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

Edith Stein's initial concern, when still focused on the need to adopt a methodological stance, only indirectly seems to hold worries about eminently ontological issues. It can be said that the question of Being is gradually being composed and finds its peak when the author makes her discovery of the way Thomas Aquinas had thought about such a question.

Thus, we are convinced that the theme of phenomenology, as a method, will culminate, in Edith Stein, in that of Ontology as a particular way of understanding Being, as expressed in *The Problem of Act and Potency*: "we do not understand anything if we do not understand being. Thus, we can call ontology that which now occupies us."²⁵ The question of Being is, by excellence, the most fundamental of philosophy in the West. From the pre-Socratic Greeks to the present day, it has constituted the very essence of Philosophy.

The Greek particularity in the affirmation of philosophical exercise stemmed from the refusal of a religious thought contained in the founding epic poetry of that culture. The Ionian thinkers, with their physics, took thought beyond explanations of a mythological nature. However, the great affirmation comes with the problem raised by the clash between Heraclitus and Parmenides during the establishment of an arche that is no longer physical.

The problem of Being, now, becomes decisive. In the clash between the philosopher of Ephesus and the one from Elea, it was the latter who ultimately prevailed, especially with the later establishment of Plato's metaphysics, which decisively outlined the

²⁴ STEIN, Edith. *¿Qué es la fenomenología?* Obras Completas. Vol. III. P. 150. La filosofía de la Edad Moderna se divide en dos grandes campos: el de la filosofía católica, que es la continuadora de las grandes tradiciones de la Escolástica, principalmente de santo Tomás, y el de la filosofía que enfáticamente se denomina a sí misma la filosofía moderna, que comienza con el Renacimiento, culmina en Kant (...) Aquel que no era católico no solía estudiar la Escolástica; el estudioso católico normal no se preocupaba con Kant.

²⁵ STEIN, Edith. *Acto y potencia estudios sobre una filosofía del ser*. Obras Completas. Vol. III p. 247. No comprenderemos nada si no comprendemos el ser. Así, podemos llamar ontología a lo que ahora nos ocupa.

necessary way to think about the problem. The myth of the cave, the quintessential expression of Platonic ontology contained in *The Republic*, presented an ideal world that contrasted with the real world.

Heir to Plato, it was Aristotle who, however, provided a treatment of the problem of Being that would be revisited, especially in the scholastic tradition and more particularly by Thomas Aquinas, with whom Edith Stein engages in dialogue and reclaims the particular problematic that takes her beyond her proximity to Edmund Husserl. Saint Thomas recovers from Aristotle the expression of Being. However, he cannot agree with the solution afforded to it by the Stagirite.

Aristotle assumes a particular meaning where all things are equated in their ontological structure, and in the author of *Metaphysics*, the question of creation is not present, and more specifically, of a Creator Being of the world, as Stein indicates in *Being Finite and Being Eternal*: "Aristotle was unaware of the existence of a creation, of a man-God who united two natures in one person, of a trinitarian divinity, and of a nature in three persons."²⁶ Thus, it is not possible to establish, coherently, an explanation that responsibly accounts for how the ontological structure is composed in man. Saint Thomas, in complete harmony with the philosopher of the Lyceum, retoma resumes the discussion by redirecting it to account not only for man but also for God: the world, man, and God constitute the drama of Being.

Edith Stein, since her years in phenomenology, nurtured the unease regarding how to understand, with some coherence, the things themselves. She had understood, from her proximity to Husserl, that phenomenology occupied a specific place against any relativist command on truth. She was convinced that it was possible to reach, through eidetic reduction, to evidences and, more specifically, that phenomenology indicated to her the decisive role of subjectivity in forming coherent explanations regarding the presentation of all reality.

If, in this context, the contributions were timely, what is the objective, then, of moving towards the thought of Thomas Aquinas and, with others from scholasticism? The text in which Edith Stein constructs, through an imaginary dialogue, the rapprochement between Husserl and Thomas is enlightening of the constant limits in the father of phenomenology. Stein, in the aforementioned dialogue between the masters, puts the following statement in Thomas's mouth::

None of us has ever doubted the power of reason. Your great achievement was to expose skepticism in all its modern guises and to attack it energetically. But ratio, for you, has never meant anything more than natural reason, while I on this point make a distinction between natural reason and supernatural reason.

The point that stands out most is, certainly, this recognition that could be found in Thomas's mouth in relation to Husserl... "but ratio, for you, never meant anything more than natural reason..."

²⁶ STEIN, Edith. *Ser Finito y Ser Eterno, Ensayo de una ascensión al sentido del ser*. Obras Completas. Vol. III. P. 613. Aristóteles ignoraba la existencia de una creación, de un hombre-Dios que reunía dos naturalezas en una sola persona, de una divinidad trinitaria y de una naturaleza en tres personas.

This particularity, present in Thomas, reveals the lines that make up the boundaries of reason as clarified by Bello²⁷:

Stein was certainly unaware of some of Husserl's texts in which the experience of faith was considered a source of truth, but he was right in pointing out that Husserl distinguished the search for truth in a philosophical sense from the search for truth in a religious sense, even going so far as to argue that philosophy is a path to understanding reality. On the other hand, Husserl's predominance and insistence on themes linked to Erkenntnistheorie rather than metaphysical questions (in the traditional sense of the term) is clear.

With a phenomenological awareness and now inserted in the problematic of Being based on scholastic discussions, mainly those of Thomas Aquinas, Stein reconstructs the methodology no longer to have access to things themselves, but to that of the finished and unfinished meaning of Being. Edith Stein, against the backdrop of Ontological/Metaphysical challenges, reconstructs the path to develop an itinerary of ascension to the meaning of Being.

It is necessary to be familiar with what involves the existence of the self, not only bound by its empirical ties (transcendental phenomenology), and also to conduct an investigation that addresses the components that transcend to the cognitive subjectivity. The meaning of being in Edith Stein's final works, which places her as original before Husserl and reveals her autonomy and philosophical scope, begins to demand both a transcendental and a realistic orientation.

The ontological/metaphysical developments in proximity to the exercise of a transcendental consciousness confirm the conviction that knowledge is the result of the fact that consciousness is intentionally directed to the object, establishing a world-consciousness. In turn, the dynamics of a realist orientation reveal that immediate knowledge is a more divine than human condition, since God and man know in different ways.

Therefore, with regard to the ontological/metaphysical problem, the central problem for Stein is to account for what mediate and immediate knowledge is. This particularity of Edith Stein renews and completes phenomenology, as can be seen in Alasdair MacIntyre's statement in his work *God, Philosophy, Universities*²⁸: "the phenomenological enterprise is not a mistake, but something incomplete, that is, its first-person orientation needs to be complemented by the third-person orientation of Thomism." For MacIntyre, it was Stein who, with originality, composed the necessary complement.

Stein's ontological/metaphysical composition therefore results in a position that approximates Thomas's realism and Husserl's transcendentalism. It is only in this exercise that the philosopher singularly enhances the ascension to the meaning of being. The characteristic notes of this originality can be described in the set that pontificates the certainty of the being of the self, and the conviction that the eternal Being is both the measure and the foundation of the being of the self.

²⁷ BELLO, Angela Ales. *Fenomenologia, ontologia e metafísica em Edith Stein*. Memorandum²⁹, out/2015. Belo Horizonte: UFMG; Ribeirão Preto: USP.

²⁸ MACINTYRE, Alasdair. *God, Philosophy Universities*. p. 159.

There is certainly a deep concern with consciousness throughout Stein's works. According to what can be seen from her considerations, it is impossible for a purely transcendental philosophical orientation to be able to explain how the transcendent world is captured by consciousness. The Enlightenment answer does not satisfy, as Mary C. Baseheart points out: "Edith Stein is a philosopher of consciousness, but she is the antithesis of the Enlightenment tendency to conceive of consciousness as pure thought and the subject as merely a thinking and self-sufficient self."²⁹ An approach to the transcendent cannot, according to Stein, happen suddenly; it is necessary to start from what is closest in a process of ascension as Stein records in *Act and Potency*.³⁰

Starting from a simple fact, immediately certain of being, we arrive at a triple division into spheres of being: the immanent sphere as that which is immediately and inseparably close and conscious to us; the transcendent, which announces itself in immanence; and a third which according to its being is radically different from immanence as from that first transcendent one.

The immediate evidence from which we must start is a conviction gathered by Stein since *Meditations on First Philosophy*³¹ of Descartes. In this work, the modern philosopher had proposed the reconstruction of philosophy as a secure science based on a basis of evident certainty. In the Cartesian exercise, the subject would eliminate, through methodical doubt, everything that could deceive him, leaving, as recalled by Stein: "what remained as an unquestionable fact was the fact of doubt itself and, in general, the fact of thought itself and, in thought, being: Cogito sum".³² Stein, recorda, igualmente, o trabalho realizado por Husserl que, pela exclusão, buscava alcançar um conjunto de dados absolutamente evidentes.

Edith Stein sees in the certainty that I am, the most primordial knowledge of man. Although questions may persist regarding the existence or not of the object, there is no doubt about the existence of my perception. The self becomes conscious of this entire operation, whether in living, as indicated by Augustine, in thinking as in the case of Descartes or even in the experience or consciousness of Husserl.

The certainty that I am is, for the philosopher, the most primordial knowledge. Here a clarification is necessary since the primordial has nothing to do with a question of time and, much less, with that which could suggest a first principle (an arche) from which certain

²⁹ BASEHEART, Mary Catherine. *Person in the world: introduction to the philosophy of Edith Stein*. Louisville. P. 10.

³⁰ STEIN, Edith. *Acto e Potencia*. Obras Completas. Vol. III p. 254. Starting from a simple fact, immediately certain of being, we have arrived at a division of three spheres of being: the immanent sphere as the one that is immediately and inseparably close and conscious to us; the transcendent that announces itself in immanence; and a third, which according to its being is radically different from the immanent, as from that first transcendent.

³¹ DESCARTES, René. *Meditações sobre Filosofia Primeira*. Tradução, nota prévia e revisão de Fausto Castilho. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2004.

³² STEIN, Edith. *Ser finito y ser eterno*. Obras Completas, vol III, p. 645. Le quedó como residuo del cual no podía dudar el hecho mismo de dudar, y después, de una manera más general, el mismo hecho de pensar, y en el pensar el ser: cogito sum.

truths could be inferred. The primordial to which Stein refers is that of evident certainty. In this way, the ontological is established in Edith Stein, as being the reality that emerges from the fact that the immediacy of knowledge, that is, the first consciousness that I am, is the foundation of all intellectual action. This is how Stein expresses herself in the complete exercise of analysis of Being, of the Self and of the unity of experience that I am.³³

This certainty of being is an unreflected certainty, that is, before any backward movement of thought, with which the spirit leaves its original attitude oriented towards objects in order to consider itself. However, when in the course of such a return the spirit immerses itself in the simple fact of its being, this suggests to it a threefold question: What is the being of which I am conscious? What is the self that is conscious of its being? What is the spiritual impulse in which I am and in which I am conscious of myself and of the stimulus itself.

There is evidence that is imposed in this particular ontology developed by Edith Stein, that is, that the self, which is conscious of itself, is the pure self. Once taken in an empirical sense, what is imposed is a worldly, effective, real self; as pure, it can be taken as the author indicates in *On the Problem of Empathy* "in a second sense, as the unity of the flow of consciousness". In this way, the conviction is made effective that the pure self is the experience of each experience of consciousness, even if it is foreign to the experiential content. The pure self is alive, as Stein indicates.³⁴:

...he lives now in joy, a little later in anxiety (desire), and later, again, in a reflection (usually he lives simultaneously in the various contents of the experience). Joy passes, desire fades, thought has an end point, but the self does not pass and does not end, remaining alive in each instance. By this we do not mean that he is entitled to an "eternal" life. We do not need to ask if it has existed forever and if it will remain there forever. What we must know is that it does not begin and does not end as the units of experience, but that it is something living and that its life is full of different content.

³³ STEIN, Edith. *Ser finito e ser eterno*. Obras Completas. Vol. III p. 646 -647. This certainty of being is an "unreflected" certainty, that is, it is found before any "turned back" thought, with which the spirit departs from the original attitude of its life oriented towards objects in order to consider itself. However, when in the course of such a return the spirit submerges itself in the simple fact of its being, this suggests a triple question: what is the being of which I am conscious? What is the self that is conscious of its being? What is the spiritual movement in which I find myself, and in which I am conscious of myself and of the movement?

³⁴ STEIN, Edith. *Ser finito y ser eterno*. Obras Completas. Vol III. p. 658. Live now in joy, soon after you will live in anxiety, and later again in reflection (usually you live simultaneously in various contents of experience); joy fades, anxiety passes, thinking ceases: but the self does not pass and does not end, but is alive in every now. With this, we do not mean that it corresponds to an "eternal" life. We do not need to ask ourselves if it has always existed and if it will be forever. It should only be indicated that it does not begin and does not pass like units of experience, but is something alive and its life is filled with different contents.

Migrating from one experience to another this pure living self presents itself in a constant flow and this allows Stein to consider that conscious life is not restricted to the immanent and immediate world, but is dependent on a transcendent world according to his account, still, in being finite and being eternal³⁵:

how fragile it suddenly seems to us to be the self, of which we speak that it was an entity par excellence and, even, doubly excellent insofar as it is always alive in front of what is not alive [...] Thus the conscious life of the self depends, by its contents, on a double "beyond", on an outer world and an inner world that manifest themselves in the conscious life of the self, in that sphere of being that is inseparable from the self.

It is in the wake of these conclusions that we are led to realize that, starting from what is simple and immediate in the configuration of our own being, we are locating different levels of domains. The first is the immanent that is evidenced by what is close to us; from it we ascend to the domain of the transcendent that reveals in immanence. A third domain shows itself, according to Stein in pure being, as indicated by:

Being, of which I am aware, cannot separate from temporality. It is, as a current being, punctual: a" now "between a" no more "and a"not yet". But he in his fluid character divides himself into being and non-being, if he presents us with the ideal of Pure Being which in itself has nothing of non-being, in him there is no "no more" and no "not yet", which is not temporal, but eternal.

In this observation, the distinction is established between the finite act that concerns our being, which by finite is marked by potency, and the pure act that, above the instance of time, is eternal and fully actualized. Sara B. Sharkey clarifies Stein's originality by stating³⁶:

Edith Stein states that we live in a "now" suspended between what is already and what is not yet. But still, we are in every moment. In each moment, we have something of completeness of being, albeit only momentarily. In this momentary fullness we find an image of the eternal, although it is a weak and very distant image and the conscious "I" is therefore – and in a very distant way – analogous to the eternal.

If the being is subject to change it is limited to an existence that passes from moment to moment and this certainly indicates

³⁵ STEIN, Edith. *Ser finito y se eterno*. Obras Completas. Vol III. p. 662 – 663. Qué débil nos parece de repente el ser del yo, del cual hemos dicho hace un momento que era el ente por excelencia e, incluso, doblemente excelente: en cuanto siempre vivo frente a lo que ya no es vivo [...] Así la vida consciente del yo depende, por sus contenidos, de un doble "más allá, de un "mundo exterior" y de un "mundo interior" que se manifiestan en la vida consciente del yo, en esa esfera de ser que es inseparable del yo.

³⁶ SHARKEY, Sarah Borden. *An Issue in Edith Stein's Philosophy of the Person: The Relation of Individual and Universal Form in Endliches und ewiges Sein*. p. 98.

fragility. It is in this fragility and fragmentation that the desire for the fullness of being is established. Stein States³⁷:

The self can arrive at the idea of eternal being not only from the presence and absence of the contents of experiences, but also from the particularity of its being that extends from one instant to another; it recedes with horror before nothingness and demands not only an endless continuation of its being, but also a full possession of being: of a being that could encompass all its content in an immutable present instead of constantly seeing what has just come to life disappear. Thus one arrives at the idea of fullness, erasing from his own being that of which he is conscious of an insufficiency.

Immersed, therefore, in Phenomenology but complementing it, Edith Stein composes the constitutive traits of an ontology, a conception of being, which opens metaphysically to transcendence. It does not repeat Husserl's phenomenology, it does not take up the ontology of Thomas Aquinas to fix itself there. His philosophical exercise, in the confrontation between the phenomenology of his master and the medieval tradition recalls the problem of Ontology.

It cannot be said that the author presented the definitive solution to the problem. Before, it enabled an original referral that serves as a backdrop for the resumption of a series of issues that were presented as striking in modernity. Edith Stein, a profound connoisseur of the Modern procedures that had shaped the human experience, revolutionizes certain basic convictions, presenting, through an always grounded criticism, her desire for "more truth".

It is not possible to get into the tune of its revolution without a basic knowledge of the issues that involve on the one hand its methodological option. Edith Stein was, throughout her production, not only an heir but a revolutionary in relation to phenomenology; she took possession of the phenomenological method and, due to its requirements, incorporated it into her life practice. It does not perceive itself as a fully rational individual, stripped of transcendence; it does not allow itself to be fascinated by the flashy developments of a nascent scientific psychology. Her search for truth leads her, as a restless spirit, beyond a proclaimed self-sufficiency. Thus, its phenomenology is not restricted to an operational exercise for knowledge; confronted with the dramas of being, it rejects pure nature and is not afraid to proclaim its insufficiency (finite being), and the need for an openness to Total being (eternal being).

The objective of our study could not be fully achieved without the necessary incursion on this constitutive set of phenomenology as a background for Stein's considerations. If we can proclaim a novelty both in relation to man and his social belonging, we must, as a

³⁷ STEIN, Edith. *Ser finito y ser eterno*. Obras Completas. Vol. III. p. 665. The self can arrive at the idea of eternal being not only starting from the becoming and the ceasing of its contents of experience, but also starting from the particularity of its being that extends from one moment to another; it recoils in horror from nothingness and does not only demand an endless continuation of its being, but also a full possession of being: of a being that could embrace all its content in a timeless present instead of constantly seeing disappear what has just come to life. Thus one arrives at the idea of fullness, erasing from one's own being that of which one is conscious as an insufficiency.

necessity, be clear about these elements. Thus, recovering the phenomenological expressiveness of the philosopher in her ontological/metaphysical recomposition, we are able to reflect later on the Constitution of Man and his place of interaction with others.

Sustained, therefore, on this starting point, in the next chapter we will have the opportunity to explore the practical consequences applied to reality. The Constitution of man as a person and his community membership acquires vitality in the recompositions that Stein made regarding the issue of his psychic life; that of his corporeality and human condition, as well as that of his defining empathic act of his relationships.

FINAL CONSIDERATION

This study fundamentally deals with phenomenology as the basis of Edith Stein's writings, without failing to perceive man as an individual inserted in society also in other sciences such as sociology, anthropology and psychology. In this way, the mark of anthropological and social modernity is characterized by the presence of these two elements, Man and society.

Since, society was endowed with an environment where automaton subjects, although rational, mediated by imposed methods, extracted superficial knowledge of the 'things' at their fingertips and ended up lacking insight.

For Edith Stein the directions taken by modern society in its capacity to produce knowledge and how this theme was treated within the community, was the basis of her phenomenological reflections on the scientification of human consciousness, from the work of Edmund Husserl.

Husserl uses Phenomenology and philosophy to recreate neutral inquiry, based on the objectivity of facts and experiences of consciousness and logic, by rescuing the sources of inquiry in the domains of science.

To achieve the desired goals, Husserl points out that intentionality is the link between consciousness and the world, consciousness being always linked to something, as well as then denotes the effectiveness in recognizing the existence of a relevant difference in the identity of the transcendent being and the immanent being. Distinction pointed out to demonstrate being, on the one hand as consciousness and on the other, as reality.

This Constitution established the method of phenomenological reduction in three stages, the natural attitude or behavior (*époche*), the eidetic reduction and the transcendental reduction, which demonstrates the characteristic events, where beings perceive the sense of consciousness. There was also a fourth artifice, that of the teleological structure, which leads to the relevance of meaning in the Constitution of knowledge.

Recalling the paths taken by Husserl, and being that he only postulated on these paths, Stein saw the opportunity to offer a more significant approach to man and his social belonging from the phenomenology pointed out by his master.

Unlike Husserl, Edith Stein draws knowledge from the central reflection and conceives of man in community, in the sense of openness to the other, in the understanding of the existential circumstance of the human being.

During her life, until 1942, the philosopher adopted a method that consisted of reading, studying, writing, Thinking and meditating on the chosen subjects, but to verify that this experience produces

three confrontations, in academic terms: responsible reflection on the problems of the world and existence, which culminated in the support of phenomenology; the need to respond to the imminent challenge, assuming a position on the identity of the world and reality, or, the ontological affirmation; and the inconsistency of accepting a world purely constituted by materiality, highlighting the contribution of metaphysics.

From phenomenology, Ontology and metaphysics, Stein conceived a framework where philosophical, existential and spiritual principles concern the perception of the human being, both as people and as a community, since Man returns to his essence.

Phenomenology for Stein has the character of recovering the immutable truth, not of its production, but of the encounter with this evident, absolute truth, for its investigative rigor that allows it to distinguish the crisis of the sciences in the commitment to the recovery of reason.

For the philosopher, knowledge first, is the certainty that I am, this being not a matter of time but of the evident certainty of the knowledge of one's own being, of the I am. For her, the individual is transcendent, beyond knowledge, unafraid to proclaim her own lack, finite being; and her need for an openness to Total being, eternal being.

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