



Soul in Edith Stein (1891–1942)

Antonio Calcagno

King's University College

Stein uses two German expressions to denote the soul: *Psyche* and *Seele*. The two words can be translated as psyche and soul, but in early 20th century German psychology and philosophy they were often used interchangeably to refer to what we would call the psyche. Stein, however, shifts from the use of psyche in her early works to the use of soul in her later works, a shift which coincides with her turn toward Christian philosophy. In her earlier works, psyche was used to denote an aspect of our personhood that was marked primarily by affectivity, understood as both emotion and sensation, as well as psychic causality, which Stein describes as working along the lines of natural causality that follows an if then or *as if* logical structure. For example, a certain external stimulus or event, say bad news, will produce a certain sensation or affect.

In the manuscript version of *Einführung in die Philosophie*, Stein changes psyche to soul (*Seele*). The use of a new term for soul gives the soul a greater function in Stein's later philosophy. More than simply the seat of affectivity and causality, the soul denotes a realm of interiority wherein one can encounter God and oneself. It also takes on the traditional senses of soul that we find in philosophy, namely, as the principle of life and as that which survives death, the immortal soul. In Stein's spiritual writings on Saint Teresa of Avila, the soul is described as an interior castle wherein one encounters a God that is both present and absent. The soul, understood in both earlier and later senses, is never identified with spirit. Stein consistently maintains that spirit is the realm of freedom, will, motivation and reason. Spirit and soul, because of Stein's understanding of the human person as unity of body, soul and spirit, though distinct, can work together.

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Keywords:

soul, psyche, affectivity, sensation, god, place of encounter, interiority, person, Teresa of Avila