



Immanence in Edith Stein (1891–1942)

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From her first work on empathy to her last book on the life and writings of Saint John of the Cross, Edith Stein demonstrates a deep concern for the relation between immanence or interiority and the outside world or exteriority. If we accept that there are, broadly speaking, two distinct but interrelated phases of Stein's work, namely, a more strictly phenomenological period and the later part that tries to integrate phenomenology with Christian philosophy and existentialist thought (especially Martin Heidegger's philosophy), the interrelationship between immanence and exteriority can be seen as a primary concept that keeps developing and changing in Stein's thought.

Her early phenomenological period gave birth to important texts like *On the Problem of Empathy*, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, *An Investigation Concerning the State*, and *Introduction to Philosophy*. All of these texts are driven by the phenomenological conviction, which Stein inherited from her teachers Edmund Husserl and Adolf Reinach, that the mind, which makes present our inner life and consciousness, can grasp and make sense [Sinn] of the outside world. Through the phenomenological method of meaning making and eidetic variation, one could achieve an profound awareness of reality. Moreover, the very awareness of reality has profound affects and can help build a sense of who and what we are, what the world is, who others are, and how we value self, others and world. For example, an act of empathy not only allows us to enter and experience the mind of the other, always from the vantage point of our own interiority, but it also allows us to understand ourselves as persons, unities of body, psyche and spirit. In Stein's later view of immanence, as developed in works like *Finite and Eternal Being*, the person comes to encounter radical transcendence, understood as the God of Stein's Christian faith. Immanence is the primary locus of this encounter, which can transform how we understand ourselves, others and the world, especially in terms of being and ethics.

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