



## *Religious Faith* in Edith Stein (1891–1942)

Antonio Calcagno  
King's University College

Stein maintains that religious faith is a kind of knowledge that is not purely deductive or inductive. In her essay, “Ways to Know God: The Symbolic Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite and Its Objective Presuppositions,” Stein claims that “Today we understand “natural theology” as doctrine about God gained from natural experience through our natural reason. Its core is the argument for the existence of God and doctrines on God’s essence and attributes inferable from our knowledge of the created world. It proceeds by conceptual thinking [...] it has an intuitive basis.” One can deploy reason to extend what the mind experiences about the possibility and nature of a divine reality. The evidence gleaned from natural reasoning about God can produce faith or belief in God.

In addition to natural knowledge about God, one can also acquire supernatural knowledge through revelation and personal and/or a mystical encounter with God. In this second, narrower sense, faith is understood in the root sense of *fides* in which one “accepts [...] or rejects [...] *supernatural revelation*. By “supernatural revelation” we mean God’s communication of himself through the *Word* in the proper sense, above all the communication of God’s mysteries hidden in himself that are inaccessible to natural knowledge by itself. (We may disregard natural knowable [truths] that are in fact contained in revelation.)” Whether natural or supernatural, faith is understood as a legitimate form of knowledge that can diminish or increase depending on one’s engagement with the question or reality of a divine being. For Stein, religious belief can have a profound impact on the life of the soul and on the personality of the person.

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