



## Self in Edith Stein (1891–1942)

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The concept of the self in Edith Stein's work is central to her conception of the human person. Throughout her corpus the self can be understood as denoting the experience of ownness, which Husserl defines as what properly belongs to the realm of the I. This ownness or what is seized properly one's own is one of the fundamental senses of personhood that Stein develops in her philosophy. The person is experienced as a unity of body, psyche and spirit. The working together of these aspects of our humanity concomitant with the grasping of the unified meaning or sense of personhood can be understood as a self. In her later work, especially *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*, one finds a fundamental distinction between the I and the self, a distinction that gives the self a unique status.

Stein describes the I as a centre of awareness or orientation that lives what it experiences, but the self is understood as that which emerges from collected experiences stored in memory. The self arises from the *positum* of past experiences and contains these experiences. Stein never returns to elaborate this distinction in her other later works. If the self is born out of past experiences upon which we reflect in order to understand ourselves, others, and the world, then we have a sense of self that is emergent and changeable across time, as who we are develops and shifts through time, depending on circumstances and events. The I and the self are in dialogue with one another, contributing to our sense of personal identity. In her work, Stein maintains that it is character that can unfold and develop through time. The introduction of a new sense of the self in Stein's Münster lectures provides her readers with a view of identity as reflexive, reflective, developmental, and emergent.

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### **Keywords:**

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