



Transcendence in Edith Stein (1891-1942)

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In Stein's early writings, transcendence is understood in strict phenomenological terms. The conscious mind can intend (literally, stretch out) realities that lie outside of itself in the world. Intentional consciousness grasps an outside or transcendent reality in the world and can make sense of those realities through a process of meaning making acts whose fulfilment lies in the correspondence between meaning intention and meaning fulfilment. The outside or transcendent object comes to manifest itself in the mind: what is intended by the mind and then processed through eidetic variation makes present to consciousness an objective meaning that corresponds to the thing itself, the thing that lies outside of the mind and which, therefore, transcends the human mind.

In Stein's later work, including *Finite and Eternal Being*, a new understanding of transcendence is added to the earlier one. Stein maintains that the Christian God must be understood as a radical form of transcendence in that It is wholly other. One encounters the radically transcendent God in one's interiority, and the human person, by virtue of her creation, stands in relation to this God of radical transcendence. The relationship between finite and eternal, infinite being is primarily constituted in the relation between the human being and the divine being. God, however, also has a life that is immanent to the life of the three persons of the Trinity and, therefore, distinct from the life and relationship between the human and the divine.

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