

## Edith Stein, a Philosopher, and a Saint: A Journey from God as a Being in the Consciousness to the God as a Real Being

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### Abstract

St. Edith Stein or Sr. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross is a Philosopher and a Saint. She was a dedicated student and assistant of Edmund Husserl. This paper aims to present the journey of Edith Stein's conversion from philosophy to Christianity while remaining a scholar of phenomenology. What Phenomenology pointed out to her was made concrete by Christian Philosophy, especially by her faith and love for the Cross of Jesus Christ. In 1921 after reading the "Book of Her Life" by St. Teresa of Avila, she then confessed that "This is the Truth". The religious crisis of Edith Stein has allowed her to search for Truth, that is, the Truth of Faith. Her "Finite and Eternal Being: An attempt and an Ascent to the Meaning Being" which she wrote during her Novitiate year as a Discalced Carmelite and together with her works on the relation between Husserlian Phenomenology and the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas were the indications of the journey of her conversion. The science of phenomenology, the science of the saints and the science of the cross summarize the whole journey of the conversion of Edith Stein.

**Key Words:** Phenomenology, Science of the Cross, Science of the Saints, God, Consciousness and Being.

### Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Empathy

The main concern of phenomenology is the problem of arriving at the certainty of things. It is the *Cogito Ergo Sum* of Rene Descartes that paved the way for the search of certainty of phenomenology, which is the Transcendental Ego. Edmund Husserl was the main proponent of this discipline. As a philosopher trained in a scientific discipline, it was his aspiration also to device philosophy to be scientific in its method. A scientific investigation is a methodic presentation of facts to arrive at the correct conclusion. Husserl aimed at the scientific presentation of philosophy through the method of phenomenology. As a method and philosophy, phenomenology investigates the essence of "things" or "phenomenon" that follows certain processes of investigating. "Phenomenon" means "that which appears". Phenomenology is aimed at the knowledge of the essence of things. It is an essence which has an objective character. This idea is somewhat related to Platonic philosophy which teaches that Essences are given and have their own existence in the world of ideas. Phenomenologists also believe that there are essences in things. This is what should be investigated. And it is in the act of consciousness where this essence can be known. Phenomenology is also a study of the act of consciousness. The relationship of consciousness and the essences of things point also to the subjectivity and objectivity of phenomenology. Essence as objectively known brings out also the subjective "I" that knows. It is in this dimension of phenomenology where relationship/objectivity can enter.

Phenomenology came into the picture as an offshoot of opposing disciplines, the Empiricists and the Idealists<sup>1</sup>. Empiricisms, like Hume, taught that what is real is what the senses can perceive. This is the only true knowledge that we

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<sup>1</sup> Sawicki Marriane (Trans.). *Edith Stein, Body Text and Science* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers), xi. 2001.

can have. As a reaction to this the Idealists claimed that real knowledge is not from the senses but what we receive in the consciousness. And as Descartes would say, “Cogito ergo Sum,” it is the mind-thinking as the only real existing. With this ongoing trend of discussion between Empiricism and Idealism, Phenomenology came in as an alternative discipline. It is a method that relies on experience in its investigations but based on the consciousness or the mind on its claiming of the truthfulness of things. This discipline therefore places itself at the middle of two clashing philosophies. This is the kind of phenomenology that may have influenced Stein. Considering the trend of the time, Husserl introduced his own method as a middle ground of two parties.

The Problem of understanding the nature of empathy underwent also a certain development from Husserl himself down to Edith Stein. To be conscious in phenomenology is an experiencing of the act of consciousness. This experiencing is important in the understanding of Empathy. Following Theodore Lipps, Husserl himself gave the name *Einfühlung* (empathy) to this experience. He means that to experience others is to experience the world. The world has all the elements needed for the experience. Empathy for Husserl is on the level of cognition and epistemology. Edith Stein took this Empathy but differently from her ‘Master’. Her main concern was not on cognitive level but on the experience of others as people / human beings. An experience that is based on how available a person is for another.

#### Edith Stein’s Nature of Empathy

The discussion of Edith Stein’s notion of empathy begins through the consideration of the word as a translation of the German word *Einfühlung*. Empathy, understood in this sense does not only connote the meaning of “in” and “feeling,” but the more comprehensive sense of “in” and “with” feeling.” It is to be distinguished from sympathy [*Sympathie* = with + *pathos*] or “with-feeling” which is the feeling we have as a response to the feeling of another person.<sup>2</sup>

Stein herself gives the example in the work on empathy:

A friend tells me that he has lost his brother and I become aware of his pain. What kind of an awareness is this?<sup>3</sup> In this case, what is important is not the external pained countenance – the sad face and bodily gestures - but the understanding of what “this awareness is in itself.”<sup>4</sup> It is clear thus that empathy is not an act of outer perception. Outer perception only gives us the sad exterior of the person and it is impossible for us to see the pain from the “orientation” where it is primordially given.<sup>5</sup> Empathy on the other hand, is concerned about the feeling of the experience “from within” which we can see from as many sides as we desire. Here, empathy happens when we are able to *feel* the feeling of the sadness of another person, that is, when I become the subject of the experience in the original subject’s place<sup>6</sup>. She continues that empathy is “*the experience of foreign consciousness in general, irrespective of the kind of the experiencing subject or of the subject whose consciousness is experienced.*”<sup>7</sup> As such, it is an act of perception that is “one of a kind” or *sui generis*.

Opposed to this idea is that of sympathy which we can see as happening when a person feels sadness as a response to a similar feeling in another. Sympathy happens, in the case of the above example, when I “feel” my own sadness so as to

<sup>2</sup> See Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (London: Peter Heath, 1954), 5-7. Henceforth *Sympathy*.

<sup>3</sup> Stein, Waltraut (Trans.). *Edith Stein, The Problem of Empathy* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), p. 6. 1989.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

“fellow-feel” (*sym + pathos*) with my friend. It is thus a feeling that results from an intellectual apprehension of an event which, in this case, is the loss of the friend’s brother.

Empathy therefore is much deeper than sympathy because in it, we feel what the other person is feeling, even though it is only later that we realize that we are not the original subjects.

Here it becomes helpful to clarify the three levels of accomplishment of empathy.

- (1) the emergence of the experience,
- (2) the fulfilling of an explication, and
- (3) the comprehensive objectification of the explained experience.<sup>8</sup>

On the first level, empathy is something that happens “primordially” to a person, and as such, is parallel to perception. The second level corresponds to the actual having of the experience as parallel to the actual experience of the other. While on the third level, one realizes that one is not the original subject of the experience but another person.

### The Role of Edith Stein’s Empathy in Phenomenology

Empathy is the way to comprehend foreign psychic experiences. As such, it plays a key role in revealing the nature of the other person making the empathizer understands him. At this point, it becomes imperative to ask: What knowledge does empathy give about the person? And what does it mean to understand a person?

The above questions lead to the epistemological consideration of how “others” *become* objects in consciousness to be understood. If empathy is the way to understand others, what is it that we know about them and how do we know what we know?

In empathy, there is the knowledge of oneself and others as psycho-physical individuals. One realizes in empathy that one is not the same as the other, and the other is not the same as the I because each has his “peculiar experiential content”.<sup>9</sup> Now, what accounts for the unity of each stream of consciousness as belonging to an “I” and not to another “I” is the soul [*Seele*]. For Stein, the soul is the “substantial unity” that makes my acts and experiences as “mine.”<sup>10</sup> It is what underlies the unity of the stream of experience, and makes the physical body “alive” thus constituting it as a “living body” [*Leib*].<sup>11</sup> Together, the soul and the living body constitute “the unity of the psycho-physical individual.”<sup>12</sup>

The knowledge of oneself as a psycho-physical individual is evident in terms of one’s sensations and feelings.<sup>13</sup> Through them, one becomes “present” to oneself precisely as the center or “zero point” [*Nullpunkt*] of all psycho-physical activities.<sup>14</sup>

However, empathy does not end in that. Aside from the psycho-physical level, there is also the spiritual or mental level wherein the individual is revealed as a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 40

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 41

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> See Discussion in Ibid, 44-50

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 43

spiritual person.<sup>15</sup> On this level, empathy is no longer the grasping of natural causality but already becomes the grasping of “motivations.”

Empathy is an act which allows the individual to see the essential relation between the physical and psychical dimensions of the act of knowledge. In the empathic act, consciousness is revealed “not only as a causally conditioned occurrence but also as an object constituting occurrence.”<sup>16</sup> As “object constituting” this means that consciousness is a “stepping out” of the order of nature and is not only a body-bound consciousness. Consciousness, which faces the order of nature as its proper correlate, is most properly understood only on the level of the spirit. “*Consciousness as a correlate of the object world is not nature, but spirit*”<sup>17</sup>.

It is on this account that Stein claims that the basis for the “realm of the spirit” is established. In the comprehension of every act of feeling, the realm of the spirit is revealed to oneself, which, is eventually revealed as the “realm of values”<sup>18</sup>. This realm of values is constituted through feeling in contrast to the realm of the physical which is constituted through perceptual acts. In this vein, Balzer observes that it is through the empathic act that an individual is “introduced to the domain of the spirit”<sup>19</sup>.

In the level of the spirit, it is possible to grasp the motivations of other people. Motivation here is understood as “meaning-content” of an experience. It is something that cannot be found on the level of physical nature; rather, it is something that can only be understood on the level of the spirit. Motivation is what an individual understand in other persons, who, as persons, are essentially constituted as spiritual.

Empathy therefore happens on two levels: the psycho-physical level and the spiritual level. These two levels, together, help us acquire a more holistic knowledge of the other as a person.

#### The Metaphysics of Edith Stein and The Meaning of Being

Edith Stein as a disciple of phenomenology did not close her doors of knowledge to explore other philosophical disciplines. What was thought to be as irreconcilable disciplines, she discovered the ways to connect them. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that Being is Real, while Phenomenology insists that Being is only a thing of the consciousness. This disagreement had led to the question of God whether he is real or just a thing of the mind. Stein wrote books on phenomenology and Thomistic philosophy that showed how she bridged the two opposing philosophies into one system of thinking. She did this by connecting the Being and the Pure Ego.

In the book *Finite and Eternal Being*, Edith Stein uses St. Thomas Aquinas to supplement what she had seen as lacking in Husserl’s *Phenomenology*. She started her presentation by the analysis of the Self or “I”, which is an approach faithful to the phenomenological tradition started by Husserl where Rene Descartes’ *Cogito Ergo Sum* was the influence.

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<sup>15</sup> See also Carmen Balzer discusses the two levels of empathy: the psycho-physical and the physical level. (Carmen Balzer, “The Empathy Problem in Edith Stein,” *Analecta Husserliana*, Vol. XXXV, ed. Anna Teresa Tymieniecka [Netherlands: Kluwer, 1991]).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 91

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 92

<sup>19</sup> Carmen Balzer, “*The Empathy Problem in Edith Stein*,” *Analecta Husserliana*, Vol. XXXV, ed. Anna Teresa Tymieniecka (Netherlands: Kluwer, 1991).

*“Rather, what is required is knowledge that the critique of knowledge can immediately point out and which is of such a sort that it precludes every doubt concerning its possibility and – being absolutely clear and indubitable – contains nothing enigmatic that might provide the occasion for all the skeptical confusions. I then referred to Cartesian doubt and to the sphere of absolute givenness, that is, to the circle of absolute knowledge, which is comprehended under the title of the evidence of the cogitation.”<sup>20</sup> “We must guard ourselves against this fundamental confusion between the pure phenomenon in the phenomenological sense and the psychological phenomenon, the object of psychology as a positive science.”<sup>21</sup>*

Metaphysics is the first philosophy according to Aristotle. It is a philosophical discipline that deals with Being as Such and since it deals with Being as the foundation of anything that exists, modern philosophers call it also as Ontology. Edith Stein’s study on Being is found in her book *Finite and Eternal Being*. She wrote the book when she was a Novice and according to her it was an attempt on her part since Thomistic Philosophy was new to her. This was in 1931 and it was only then, in the later part of her life that she dedicated much of her time to understand the metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas. She approached Thomistic metaphysics in a phenomenological way. She explained Being through the use of phenomenological method.

This approach of Stein where she treated Metaphysics and Phenomenology as two sciences working together is a breakaway from the primary purpose of why Edmund Husserl introduced Phenomenology as a method. Like Rene Descartes’ Cogito, Husserl wanted to do away from Aristotelian and Thomistic way of philosophizing.

Stein began her treatment of being from the analysis of common experience. She followed the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and St. Thomas to prove the existence of Being through the experience of the individual particular beings. Following Plato’s World of Ideas, there are essentials of things that exists independent of the particular (this) experiences. Those are real, constant and universal in nature. For Aristotle, Universals or essences are present in the particulars. They are present in the individual experiences or events of life but never affected in the change that happen in the individuals. Stein is fond of using Joy as an example. There is such a thing as Joy in general. The joy that we experience at present is an actual joy and it is particular in nature. It exists in the one experiencing that joy. But the moment that the experience fades away then joy cease to exist as well. In the same context being as temporal is also known as possible beings since they undergo becoming in their nature.

Phenomenologically Being is in the consciousness. Including the concept of God, He is a being in the consciousness. We should remember that anything inside the consciousness is intentional or beings of reasons and not everything in the mind is real. To claim that God is a being in the consciousness will make him as intentional being. In one interview of Jean-Luc Marion, a modern phenomenologist, he was asked why was he talking about the non-existence of God in phenomenology? He answered, I am a Catholic, I believe in God, but only that when we follow the logic of phenomenology it will lead you to the conclusion that God does not exists, so I have to follow that argument. *“It will be necessary, however, to justify a few points in what*

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<sup>20</sup> Lee Hardy (Trans.). Edmund Husserl, *Idea of Phenomenology* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publisher) 26.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 33

follows. Under the title *God Without Being* we do not mean to insinuate that God is not, or that God is not truly God.”<sup>22</sup>

Edith Stein did not remain on what phenomenology is teaching about God as a being in the consciousness. She further taught that Being is real in God. Why did Stein deviate from her “Master”? Like many other phenomenologists after Husserl, they question the nature of the Transcendental Ego. Where is the place of the Ego? It is in nowhere and cannot be defined. One major criticism on Husserl is that the Ego is Soliptistic. Although he explained his position on this.

*“Thus it can only be truly justified in saying: I exist, and everything that is not me is mere phenomena, resolves itself into phenomenal contexts. Should I adopt, then, the standpoint of solipsism? This is a hard and exacting demand.”*<sup>23</sup>

Fr. Domingo Rafael Alimajen, Jr. during the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Phavisminda Conference on May 13-15, 2015 in Iloilo, he delivered his talk entitled *Founding a Tradition of Philosophy: Husserl's The Origin of Geometry and Theory of Transcendental Intersubjectivity*. He explained that the Transcendental Ego is intersubjective through the we-consciousness of that Ego. “The transcendental ego is a “*socius* of a sociality, a ‘community member’ within a total community.” (*Hua XV*, 193.) The being of the transcendental ego is being a member of transcendental intersubjectivity. (*Ms. C [Zeitkonstitution als Formale Konstitution]*, 17, 88b.) Thus, transcendental subjectivity is inter-subjectivity. (Husserliana VIII, Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie (1923/24), Zweiter Teil: Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, Hrsg. von Rudolf Boehm, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959, 480. Hereafter, *Hua VIII*.)

Edith Stein stretched further the discussion of empathy, which was first tackled by Husserl in his book *Ideas*. She used empathy in order to discover the other or the foreign consciousness. What was considered as a problem about the place of the Ego, Stein resolved it through the empathy. In her book *The Problem of Empathy* she detailed the role of the foreign bodies in the constitution of empathy. The experience in empathy is primordial to the other and not to the subject experiencing or empathizing. For her, empathy completes the idea of intersubjectivity.

Stein’s conversion to Catholicism was instrumental in her transition from phenomenology to Scholasticism. She believed that Being is analogical. In her book *Finite and Eternal Being*, she explained that God as Being and analogical can be known or demonstrated from the individual beings because there is similarity and difference between them.

*“The intelligences thus differ from one another in accordance with their respective degrees of potency and act so that a higher intelligence, being closer to the first existent, has more actuality and less potency and the same is proportionately true of others”*<sup>24</sup> Actuality is perfection. God alone possesses the complete and fullness of actuality since he is a Being that is Perfect. The more these lesser beings share in his actuality the more perfect they can be. The closer the lower beings are with God the greater the perfection they can be. In her analysis of the relation between individual beings and God as Being, she used the Cartesian Cogito, *“whenever the human mind in its quest for truth has sought an indubitably certain points of departure it always encountered the inescapable fact of its own being or existence”*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas Carlson (Trans). Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (London: University of Chicago Press) 2, 1991

<sup>23</sup> Lee Hardy (Trans.). Edmund Husserl, *Idea of Phenomenology* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publisher), 17

<sup>24</sup> Reinhardt, Kurt F. (Trans). Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being an Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), 33. 2002.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 35



The notion of act and potency, Esse and Essence, Quiddity and Nature, Matter and Form and more are all understood within the analogical concept of Being.

### Nature of the Pure Ego

Phenomenology as epistemological in nature is focused on the study of the nature of knowledge. It is concern with the beings that is present in thinking or consciousness. *“Consciousness is discussed as a way and means to gain access to the world of existents as a particular genus of being”*<sup>26</sup>. In phenomenology, consciousness is a consciousness of something which is not consciousness itself. The concept or the movement of intentionality, that is from subject to object is present in the understanding of the nature of consciousness. The consciousness of not consciousness itself announces the objectivity of knowledge. Anything inside the consciousness is intentional in nature. God in the consciousness has intentional characteristics.

Phenomenology as influenced by Rene Descartes’ *Cogito Ergo Sum*, investigates the “Pure I” or “Pure Ego”. It is the most certain of all that exists. Its existence we cannot doubt nor question. Edmund Husserl stated that Pure Ego has no definite place and cannot be defined and yet it is present in all human experiences because the subject of these experiences is the “I”. Edith Stein affirmed that this Pure Ego is indefinite, undefinable and no place but she added that it can be found however, in the experiential units. The existence of Pure Ego in reality, however, is still a lingering question.

Pure Ego exists in the experiential units as the foundation of all experiences. But in the absence of experiences Pure Ego is nowhere to be found again. It has a temporal existence and therefore subject to time. It is finite since it is subject to becoming. Finite beings are imperfect, incomplete and reducible to nothingness. Change or becoming is the natural characteristic of finitude. The mere thinking of nothingness is an existential anxiety or angst. Today you are but tomorrow you will not be. Nothingness is something that the Ego abhors but as becoming it cannot escape from that experience. It should not be mistaken however that inspite of the anxiety of the Pure Ego, it remains stable and it remains secure in its place in every experience. In its becoming and impermanence, Ego needs support in order to assure its continuous existence. *“This anxiety or dread is the fear of being no more, and it is thus the experience of anxiety which brings people face to face with nothingness”*<sup>27</sup>.

### Eternal Being and the Pure Ego

Her exposure to phenomenology and even her Jewish background deprived her of religion. Much more during her student days in philosophy the ideas of religion and God are deprived of her. In her book *The Problem of Empathy* she wrote about her distancing from the discussion of God and any religious matters. This is understandable because of the discipline of phenomenology.

*“Nevertheless, the study of religious consciousness seems to me to be the most appropriate means of answering our question, just as, on the other hand, its answer is of most interest*

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<sup>26</sup> Reinhardt, Kurt F. (Trans). *Edith Stein, Finite and Eternal Being an Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), xxix. 2002.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 57

*for the domain of religion. However, I leave the answering of this question to further investigation and satisfy myself here with is 'non liquet,' 'It is not clear'.<sup>28</sup>*

The Being of phenomenology that is intentional in nature is made concrete or real by the Being of Christian Philosophy. Like Martin Heidegger in his Being and Time, he said that Dasein is in continuous revealing and still revealing. But in St. Thomas Aquinas, the Being of Christianity has revealed already. It is in Christian Philosophy that Edith Stein had truly discovered the Being that has revealed itself already. Such revelation is a proof of its real existence.

Edith Stein's search for the meaning of being and its real existence can be traced from her books *Finite and Eternal Being*, *Science of the Cross* and the story of her experiences in life. The religious crisis, readings of the books of St. Teresa Avila and St. John of the Cross made her realize of the Truth that she has been searching for. Self-examination was her method of discovering God. She began from her experience of the finitude of the self. The discovery of the Eternal Being is from the experience of one's finitude. *"In my own being, then, I encounter another kind of being .that is not mine but that is the support and ground of my own unsupported and groundless being"*

Eternal Being is God who is perfect and has the complete possession of existence. His existence is his Essence. Stein followed the explanation of Eternal Being with that of the Necessary Being of St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*. Necessary Being is Aquinas' third proof of the Existence of God. There two classifications of beings: the Necessary and Contingent beings. Contingent beings are the possible beings or Stein termed it as beings with possibility. They are subjected to becoming, therefore, imperfect or incomplete while the perfect being has the full possession of actuality. There is no possibility in a perfect being but only the fullness of actuality. Contingency cannot sustain one's being. It is always in need of support from a perfect being that is, the Necessary Being or Eternal Being. *"Eternity is a full possession of being. It is a being of such a kind that there is nothing that it is not. It is everything"<sup>29</sup>*

Like St. Thomas Aquinas, Stein has offered also her own proofs of the existence of God. One unique among her proofs is the use of faith. Philosophy per se does not entertain faith as a foundation of thinking or reasoning. Here Stein combined religion and philosophy in her quest for the Eternal Being. *"There are existents which are beyond the reach of natural experience and natural reason but which have been made known to us by revelation; and they confront the receptive mind with entirely new tasks."<sup>30</sup>* She calls on the help of faith because she understood the limited capacity of the human mind. Remember, that she started her investigation about being from man's experience of limits.

*"We may call finite what does not possess its being but needs time in order to attain being... The genuinely infinite does not receive being as a gift but is in possession of being; it is the master of being, yea, it is being itself. We call it eternal being. It does not stand in need of time; it is the master of time, too."<sup>31</sup>*

Pure Ego as subject to the temporal limit of experiential units is not Eternal nor Necessary Being. Neither can we also equate that Pure Ego with finite beings since Husserl and Stein did not think about it in that way. But from the analysis of its nature there is no way also that it can be similar to a perfect being. Since its existence or appearance is dependent on the existence of experiential units, then is

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<sup>28</sup> Stein, Waltraut (Trans.). *Edith Stein, The Problem of Empathy* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), p. 118. 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 61

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 21

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 61



does not possess any actuality by itself. It is still reliant on the Eternal Being for its existence.

### The God of Edith Stein

Edith Stein's discussion about the Real God that exists is in her book the *Science of the Cross*. She wrote the book on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the birth of St. John of the Cross. The cross of Christ has a word. "*Christ sent me to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power... For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*"<sup>32</sup> (Quote from 1 Cor. 17-18; 22-24, p. 20). The Cross of Christ speaks to us and has a message. It conveys to us its salvific mission. For Stein, the cross is alive where Christ communicates to us and on our part we can listen. Personal encounter with Christ is in the Cross.

*"Science of the Cross, Science is not about a theory nor a body of a true propositions. We are dealing with a well-organized truth – a theology of the cross – but a living, real and effective truth"*<sup>33</sup>.

The discussions in the *Science of the Cross* is a complete turnaround of Edith Stein from philosophy to theology. For the modernity, philosophy and theology cannot be together, but Stein united them. She believed that it is always possible to worship God while doing scholarly research. However, we should not mistake to think that she totally abandoned phenomenology. Instead, she used phenomenology to explain the science of the cross. The interpretation of the images of the cross and the readings of the meanings in the texts of St. John of the Cross are made possible because of her use of "epoche" as a method. The dark night of faith and the dark night of the soul as a form of abandonment of the soul of all the things not essential in favor of God as the most essential of life is a form of philosophical bracketing which can be equated with "*spiritual epoche*". The concept of "darkness" or "night" is like as "spiritual epoche" wherein we bracket all the non-essentials; the senses, biases, idols so that the soul or person will feel uncomfortable, confused and will not know what to do, but in faith, he will search for God and unite with Him through the acceptance of the cross.

*"This is holy realism. The example of the saints demonstrates to them how things should actually be: where there is genuine, lively faith, there the doctrine of faith and the tremendous deeds of God are the content of life... such realism, when it leads a holy soul to accept the truths of faith, becomes the science of the saints. If the mystery of the cross becomes its inner form, it turns into a science of the cross."*<sup>34</sup>

Phenomena or "that which appears" is a method which Husserl advises to go back to the things themselves. St. John of the Cross, according to Edith Stein, advises his followers how to truly present oneself before God. Allow God to say his message, be humble, do not get distracted and focus. Let God speak to you, let God appear before you. It is a phenomenological way of reading the text of St. John of the Cross. On April 21 1938, she wrote at the back of her card: "*To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing. One thing alone I do, and that is Love.*"

To understand the Eternal Being there is a need for the mind or intellect to surrender to God. For Stein there are two kinds of unions: the active union and

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<sup>32</sup> Josephine Koepfel (Trans.). Edith Stein, *Science of the Cross* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications) 20, 2002.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 9

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 10-11

passive union. Active union is one's effort to unite with God while passive union is God waiting and granting graces for those who will unite with Him. Intellect has to surrender in order to unite with God. *"The intellect is recollected and united with the truth that is the subject of its thought and just so the Holy Spirit is united to it in that truth."* An act of complete surrender of being in view of the Eternal Being is wisdom. In here the message of the cross can be received completely. As a testimony of her embrace of the cross, she also had crosses in her life which she carried with delight. After her conversion, she became a faithful follower of St. John of the Cross, whom she called "The Father". *"A science of the cross can be gained only when one comes to feel the cross radically."*<sup>35</sup> Stein was never run out of crosses in her life. We can list down some of her life-crosses:

- a. At the age of two the death of her father
- b. At the age of fifteen the death for her friend Adolph Reinach
- c. Discrimination Against Women to the point that her thesis was not read for some time
- d. The constant hiding from the Anti-Aryan war of Hitler
- e. August 9, 1942 her death in a gas chamber by the Nazi

### The Certain Knowledge of the Real God

The way of faith is a concrete proof of God's existence. In the Science of the Cross, faith as a dark way and the complete surrender to God, allows the intellect to grasp the Truth. Philosophy without theology is an incomplete quest for truth. Phenomenology, as a method is introduced in order to guide the mind to arrive at the certainty of knowledge. But at the end of that thinking there is still a lacuna that needs to be filled in. The Pure Ego is still incomplete. Certainty of knowledge is not simply about the process of knowing but it is more about the object of that knowledge whether perfect or imperfect. The search for true knowledge in philosophy is not in the process of thinking but about the content or the thought of thinking. God as the Pure Intellect is the Perfect Being that we can think of, from the fourth way of St. Thomas Aquinas. By way of demonstration, God is the Perfect Being that the mind can think of.

Edith Stein dedicated her life to God. It is absurd to think of her offering her very life for the one that is not real. What made her say, "This is the truth" after reading the book of St. Teresa Avila? It was because of the grace of faith that illumined upon her. Stein believed of the need of the grace of the Holy Spirit since our limited intellect cannot really grasp Infinite God. Since her conversion, she was truly convinced of the God that she is following. *"I must tell you that I already brought my religious name with me into the house as a postulant."*<sup>36</sup>

Edith Stein has changed her name after she entered the convent into Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. This was her expression of commitment to the Cross of Christ and at the same time her witnessing of her conviction to the teachings of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa Avila. Phenomenology helped her to go deeper to the understanding of the mystical experiences of the two saints. She may not have experienced ecstasy but her intellect was able to see the truthful and indubitable knowledge that it longed for. Mystical Phenomenology is the result of Stein's interpretation of the mysticisms of the saints. The saints encounter God in their prayers, ecstasy or mystical experiences. For Stein she encountered God through the experiences of the saints and own those experiences by embracing the cross in it. She

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxv

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, xix

lived the science of the cross because of her personal encounter of the living God who called her to follow him.

### Philosophy and Faith

*“Modern philosophy become a large extent a godless discipline... As far as the nature of philosophy is concerned, he says, it is entirely independent of faith and theology”*<sup>37</sup>

Modern Philosophy like Martin Heidegger and Rene Descartes questioned the existence of a Christian Philosophy. Battista Mondin, in his book *The History of Medieval Philosophy* mentioned the different philosophers who are not in favor of the existence of Christian Philosophy. They say that Christian Philosophy is a contradiction in terms. Martin Heidegger argued: the faith that a Christian possesses cannot help in facing the philosophical questions. Faith refutes philosophy’s very object, which is the question concerning the existent’s foundation: ‘why, then, is there being instead of nothingness? A believer simply confesses that being is created by God, and that’s all.’<sup>38</sup>

The god of philosophy is different from the God of theology. The former exists in reason while the latter exists in reality and proven by faith. However, in the medieval period, Christian thinkers exerted all their efforts to reconcile philosophy and theology or faith and reason. St. Clement of Alexandria preached that philosophy is a handmaid of theology. Severinus Boethius called philosophy as the love of wisdom. He noted that wisdom is the wisdom taught in the book of wisdom in the Bible. A true philosopher is a searcher of wisdom who is God. Johannes Scotus presented the partnership of faith and reason. There are things that reason cannot reach and it is there that faith can help, like the things of the Divine. Christian Philosophy has able to show the relationship between faith and reason. *“Philosophy will encounter questions that it cannot answer and uses faith as a source of knowledge, then, we have Christian Philosophy.”*<sup>39</sup>

*“If you do not believe, you will not understand.” (Isaiah 7:9)*<sup>40</sup> The disagreement between philosophy and faith is due to the objects of their studies. The former is for the beings of reasons while the latter is for the real being. *“Philosophy is a structure and formation of the mind, as a form of knowledge, inquiry and judgment” (Finite and Eternal Being, p.14)* But for a Christian thinker, there is no conflict between the two. Edith Stein’s life and conversion had shown the proof of their mutual relation. *“Whatever derives from the synthesis of theological and philosophic truth bears the imprint of this dual source of knowledge, and faith, as we are told, is a dark light. Faith helps us to understand something, but only in order to point to something that remains for us incomprehensible.”*<sup>41</sup>

Philosophy has prepared Stein for the Gospel. Philosophy for Stein is an existential search. The journey of her life which was full of crosses, philosophy assisted her to understand the events that are happening in her life. The new attitude of “epoche” assisted Edith Stein in becoming totally open to religion, to Christian

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<sup>37</sup> Reinhardt, Kurt F. (Trans). Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being an Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), 5, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Battista Mondin. *A History of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Rome: Pontifical Urbaniana University) 3, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Reinhardt, Kurt F. (Trans). Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being an Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), 21, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 58

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 25

Catholic phenomena. *“Philosophy reaches its perfection with the aid of theology, not being itself transformed into theology.”*<sup>42</sup>

Edith Stein, since her conversion she called faith as a dark light. This is visible in her works *Finite and Eternal Being* (1931) and *Science of the Cross* (1942). It means to say that her understanding about faith is still founded on the phenomenological epoche but revised within the Christian philosophy.

*“But this is not so. In fact, we are set upon a surer way, albeit a dark way, one engulfed by night, the way of faith. It is a way, for it leads to the goal of union. But it is a nocturnal way, since in comparison to the clear insight of the natural understanding, faith is a dark knowledge; it acquaints us with something but we do not get to see it.... Faith, on the contrary, is the midnight darkness because here not only are the senses inactive but the knowledge from natural understanding is eliminated. The dawn of the new day of eternity, however, breaks into her night when the soul finds God.”*<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

Edith Stein’s journey is visible in two ways: as a philosopher, it is manifested in her transition from phenomenology to Thomism and as a Saint, it is in her conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Her life as a philosopher and as a saint are good points to look at especially for those who think that religion and philosophy are irreconcilable. She had proven to the world of philosophy especially to phenomenology that reason has no quarrel with faith. She is unique as a philosopher because of this kind of philosophizing. Her intellectualism brought her to the realization of the real God of Christians. In history, modern philosophy especially phenomenologists avoid any discussion of God because of their reasoning that God may not be a real being. Stein, where she offered her talents and life for philosophy and faith, can help us re-think our stand or belief about the attitude of phenomenology to Christian Philosophy.

The Pure Ego of phenomenology was considered to be indefinable, indefinite, no-place and nowhere to be found. Stein in her writings, was able to locate this Pure Ego and found its place in the experiential units. She made it clear that God is still the Ultimate Being and even Pure Ego is subject to the power of the Divine Being. Pure Ego as the ultimate reason of phenomenology is made subject to the Divine Reason of Christian Philosophy. Today, by the works of Edith Stein, there is no more reason to abandon Metaphysics as the First Philosophy, a philosophical discipline that is fundamental to Christian Philosophy. The real philosophy as the love of wisdom is that which has able to find the Truth and that Truth is the God of Christians. St. Justin Martyr, a Catholic Saint and a Medieval philosopher said that the task of a true philosopher is to search for the Divine, where Stein did faithfully.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Stein, *Science of the Cross*, 46

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