

Edith Stein on Individual and Community: Critical Insights on a Philosophy of Inclusion

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Abstract

Discourses concerning “inclusivity” in different facets of society, have recently gained attention in various disciplines. It is saddening to hear of news involving discrimination and exclusion in various forms still occurring in the world. Discussions on inclusivity should introduce and build on ideas that help the world be more inclusive. This paper argues that critical insights from Stein’s analyses of the individual and community can be relevant to discourses on philosophy of inclusion. A genuine community for Stein involves intersubjective relations between individuals that entail an open commitment to and “living” in the shared world with the community. Through the mental and sensate levels, the individual knows and experiences, respectively, the shared values and meanings of the community; and the shared lifepower of the community which shape the character of the community’s members. The idea of inclusivity should be a part of the shared values, meanings, and lifepower of the community that should be reiterated and practiced. If society is to be more inclusive, then its members need to strive to be more than just a mass of individuals but, a genuine community.

Keywords: Intersubjectivity, Individual, Community, *Lifepower*, Inclusion

Introduction

Philosophy is not just an academic discipline discussing theories concerning the natural world. Part of its multifaceted purpose is to provide guiding insights for persons to live full lives. Philosophers have a role to play in removing barriers and obstacles hindering individuals and groups from participating in discourses concerning the community.¹ One such obstacle is the presence of various forms of discrimination between and among different groups in society. Discrimination involves “harmful actions directed towards others because of their membership in a particular group.”² The slavery and discrimination of Africans and African-Americans; as well as the anti-Semitism during the holocaust are some examples of discrimination in history. Racially-motivated discriminatory acts are still evident in the present. In 2015, nine people were killed in a racially-motivated hate crime.³ The George Floyd case (2020) sparked uproar leading to protests against police brutality

¹ Reyes, Ramon C. "The Role of the Philosopher as Social Thinker and Critic: Revisited." *Suri: Journal of the Philosophical Association of the Philippines*, 2014: 18.

² For Fishbein, this definition is similar to those provided by Allport (1954) and Marger (1991). See Fishbein, Harold D. *Peer Prejudice and Discrimination*. 2nd. Mahwah, New Jersey: Routledge, 2012. 6.

³ See Sanchez, Ray, and Keith O'Shea. Mass shooter Dylann Roof, with a laugh, confesses, 'I did it'. December 10, 2016. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/09/us/dylann-roof-trial-charleston-video/index.html> (accessed May 1, 2022).

and racial injustice.⁴ Racial discrimination directed towards Asians and Asian-Americans were also reported since 2022: likely fueled by remarks that attributed the disease to Asians.⁵ Gender-based discrimination is likewise still prevalent. The different waves of feminism show the struggles that women fought to get equal rights with men: bringing great improvements for women. However still, women's contributions in academia are undervalued and women sometimes, are still harassed and treated unfairly.⁶ Even with the developments that the world has experienced for centuries, discrimination is still prevalent. A more inclusive attitude and additional discourses on inclusivity are needed to make society and the world more inclusive.

Discourses concerning "inclusivity" in different facets of society, have recently gained attention in various disciplines. Inclusion is "the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded."⁷ Efforts to make society more inclusive are abound. In Elliot's classroom lesson and experiment on racism and discrimination in, *A Class Divided*,⁸ she emphasized the importance of education in teaching inclusivity. Pariñas (2020) argues that pedagogies should be flexible and should recognize, accommodate, accept, and respond to the diversity of students' needs and abilities and ways of living within the humanizing climate of critical hope and sensitive conscience.⁹ Gonzales et. al. (2021), discovered that efforts were made for US organizations to be more diversified and inclusive; but the majority of research-participants were reluctant to talk about "exclusionary culture and practices."¹⁰

Gender inclusivity, has recently seen some improvements, but challenges are still present. Geetha (2009) observed that more women are engaged in diverse and challenging roles, but still face discrimination in job promotions.¹¹ In the

⁴ See Karnowski, Steve, and Mohamed Ibrahim. Probe launched following George Floyd killing finds race discrimination by Minneapolis police. April 27, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/04/27/probe-after-george-floyd-death-discrimination-minneapolis-police/9555115002/> (accessed May 2, 2022).

⁵ See Cabral, Sam. Covid 'hate crimes' against Asian Americans on rise. May 21, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56218684> (accessed May 4, 2022). See also Kambhampaty, Anna Purna. 'I Will Not Stand Silent.' 10 Asian Americans Reflect on Racism During the Pandemic and the Need for Equality. June 5, 2020. Retrieved from <https://time.com/5858649/racism-coronavirus/> (accessed May 4, 2022).

⁶ See Mancenido-Bolaños, Marella Ada V., and Darlene O. Demandante. "Women and Philosophy: An Initial Move Towards a More Inclusive Practice of Philosophy in the Philippine Context." *Kritike XIV*, no. 1 (June 2020).

⁷ Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Inclusion. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved May 17, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inclusion>.

⁸ See FRONTLINE PBS Official YouTube Channel. *A Class Divided* (Full Film). January 19, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE (accessed August 24, 2020).

⁹ Pariñas, Noel S. "The Paralysis of Traditional Schools." *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy VI*, no. 2 (2020): 49.

¹⁰ Gonzales, Leslie D., et al. "Comfort over Change: a Case Study of Diversity and Inclusivity Efforts in U.S. Higher Education." *Innovative Higher Education 46* (2021): 445-460.

¹¹ Geetha cites Ms. Muthamma who filed a petition against discrimination in work promotions. See Geetha, Kannan. "Gender Inclusivity: Nurturing Unique Talents." *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision-Makers 34*, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2009): 86-87.

Philippines, laws and bills¹² are in place to safeguard the welfare of women and people of different genders. Sanchez (2011) asserts that this is a sign that Filipinos desire to remove gender bias in the country, but the country is still far from being genuinely gender inclusive.¹³ Filipina Philosophy scholars are gaining more opportunities to pursue international scholarship and are actively performing well in the academe, but the participation of women in Philosophy needs improvement.¹⁴ LGBT students, likewise often experience bullying, discrimination, and even physical and/or sexual assault. Government interventions,¹⁵ are present but insufficient. Discussions on inclusivity should introduce and build on ideas that help the world be more inclusive. In this paper, Edith Stein's analysis of individual and community is used as a source of critical insights relevant to discourses concerning philosophy of inclusion.

Edith Stein, throughout her life, encountered discrimination in many forms. She witnessed the unequal opportunities and rights allotted for women in society: prompting her to join feminist movements for women's right to suffrage in her school. She was treated unfairly when she applied for a university position in 1919, after leaving her work as Husserl's "teaching assistant." Stein did not get the university position. She wrote thereafter to the "Prussian Ministry for Science, Art and Education in protest of the discrimination against women in academia."¹⁶ Stein was greatly concerned of anti-Semitism even before 1933. "Her 1925 essay on the state was critical of racist and totalitarian trends in Germany."¹⁷ In 1932 at Munster, Stein witnessed university students violently attacking Jews. She lost her university position for being a Jew a year later.¹⁸ These experiences had a lasting impact on Stein's thoughts. Her dissertation on the problem of empathy expounds on how one can account for his experience of other peoples' experiences. Building on this idea, Stein developed her notions of the individual and community. Examining her life and works, one could say that Stein was an advocate for equality, fairness, and inclusion.

¹² For example, RA 9262: the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004; RA 9710: Magna Carta for Women; RA 6949: National Women's Day; RA 6725: Prohibition on Discrimination Against Women; RA 11210: 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave Law; and House Bill 4892: SOGIE Equality Bill.

¹³ Sanchez, Emily V. "A Long Way to Go: An Evaluation of the Protection of Women's Rights Provided by Philippine Law." In *Feminista: Gender, Race, and Class in the Philippines*, edited by Noelle Leslie Dela Cruz, & Jeane Peracullo, 151-164. Manila: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2011. 164.

¹⁴ Mancenido-Bolaños and Demandante. "Women and Philosophy: An Initial Move Towards a More Inclusive Practice of Philosophy in the Philippine Context," 3-5.

¹⁵ For example, Child Protection Policy; Anti-Bullying Law; and Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law. See Thoreson. "Just Let Us Be" Discrimination Against LGBT Students in the Philippines.

¹⁶ Borden, Sarah. *Edith Stein*. New York City, New York: Continuum, 2003. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

The paper argues that critical insights from Stein's analyses of the individual and community can be relevant to discourses on philosophy of inclusion. Critical insights, in this paper, are meant to be understood as essential or relevant insights or ideas that help foster inclusivity in society. These insights could enrich discourses on inclusivity, without which a vision of a more inclusive society may not be fully realized. The discussion of the paper begins with a brief exposition of Stein's phenomenology of empathy, highlighting how empathy is a foundation for intersubjectivity and intersubjective relationships, which are essential to an inclusive community. The second part analyzes Stein's notions of individual and community: discussing each idea separately to highlight how the nature of individuals contribute to and is influenced by the community, and vice versa. Finally, the paper expounds on how insights from Stein's philosophy on the individual and community are relevant to discourses concerning inclusivity.

Empathy and Intersubjectivity

Empathy allows one to "experience," the experience/s of another. Stein's discussion on empathy is important to understanding her notions of the individual and community. because for her, human beings are communal beings.¹⁹ The human person has a tendency to "reach out beyond themselves, toward a complete unification."²⁰ This is only possible if there is someone to reach out to: a person who is already understood to a certain extent. "Empathy is central to the phenomenological project, and ... empathetic experiences are also central to being a person."²¹ Empathy is a non-primordial experience²² in content which announces a primordial one within a consciousness outside of one's own which can occur at the psycho-physical and at the spiritual levels and always involves at least two *Ps*.²³ At the psycho-physical level, the empathizer "experiences" what another person experiences in a non-primordial way. At the spiritual level, the *I* becomes aware of a person's feelings in a pregnant sense that reveal their inner spiritual nature or value realm. "[I]n every literal act of empathy, i.e., in every comprehension of an act of feeling, we have already penetrated into the realm of the spirit ... the world of values."²⁴ Paying attention to how the object of experience (including the non-primordial experience) makes a person feel, a person is made aware of his constitution in terms of his values.

¹⁹ Ibid, 48.

²⁰ Stein, Edith. *The Collected Works of Edith Stein: Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*. Translated by Mary Catherine Baseheart, & Marianne Sawicki. Vol. VII. Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2000. 317.

²¹ Borden, *Edith Stein*, 29.

²² Primordial experiences are those that happen in the "here-and-now." Non-Primordial experiences are those that do not happen in the "here-and-now." See Stein, Edith. *The Collected Works of Edith Stein: On the Problem of Empathy*. 3rd Revised. Translated by W. Stein. Vol. 3. Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 7-8.

²³ The "*I*," for Stein pertains to the individual consciousness who, as a subject and pure consciousness, interacts with objects and other fellow subjects in the world. The "*P*" is different from the physical body of the individual but is related to and "surrounded" by it. In this paper, the "*P*" that was just mentioned is italicized to distinguish it from its other usages. See Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 37-43.

²⁴ IThe *I* can feel and perceivebid, 92.

In the empathizing act, the empathizer is an *I*: a stream of consciousness.²⁵ Every experience is set against the background of a stream of varied experiences that are available to varied *I*s.²⁶ For Stein, within such streams of experiences, an *I* is within one experience at one time, then transitions to another. “[T]he ‘*I*’ of this experience was not always in experience but shifted over or was drawn into it from another experience.”²⁷ Within this stream of experience, the *I* is exposed to others who also experience different phenomena and maybe even the same phenomena that the *I* experienced previously. The empathizer’s zero point of orientation begins with himself; that gradually transitions to the foreign consciousness’s own zero point. This orientation is an individual’s relative viewpoint from which he perceives the world. This could refer to the point from which an individual perceives his physical body²⁸ or the point from which an individual perceives other physical bodies from his own physical body. In the case of the former, Stein says that the *I*, can perceive his physical body from this zero point.

The *I* is “surrounded by the living body ... and ... has no distance from the zero point, and all that is given at a distance from the zero point is also given at a distance from the *I*.”²⁹ When an individual feels pain in his left foot, the pain is perceived by the *I* from his viewpoint as if the foot is an extended part of the individual separate from his own consciousness. The zero point here is the *I*’s viewpoint: the conscious subject himself. The *I* perceives his body from this zero point, but the *I* cannot be “geometrically localized to any part of [the] physical body.”³⁰ One cannot say that the *I* is found in the heart, the brain, or in the example, the left foot. The *I* can feel and perceive the pain *in* the left foot, but it does not mean that the *is in* the left foot itself perceiving said pain from within. The living body itself can also serve as a zero point of orientation when perceiving other physical bodies outside one’s own. “The living body as a whole is at the zero point of orientation with all physical bodies outside of it.”³¹

When an individual perceives others, he deals with other *I*’s who are within their own living bodies, perceived by the individual through his own living body. This creates, both a “bridge” and a “barrier” of the *I* between himself and things in the external world. When empathizing, the empathizer’s perception of another’s experience/s begins from the empathizer’s zero point. The empathizer gradually *transitions* to the foreign consciousness’s zero point, viewing to a limited extent the experience from the other’s own point of view. The *I*, when empathizing, does not

²⁵ Ibid, 38.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 39.

²⁸ The physical body is the perceived body of persons: its concrete physical givenness. The living body is constituted in a two-fold manner, (1) a sensed living body, that is the body as perceived by the *I* that is surrounded by the physical body and (2) an outwardly perceived physical body of the outer world. See Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 43.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 43.

shift his zero point to that of the other's; rather, the empathizer retains his 'primordial' zero point orientation while he empathically but non-primordially obtains the other one.³² The object being experienced in the empathizing act is shared by more than one center of orientation. Empathy also involves interpreting other's experience/s in reference to one's own. Here, the empathizing *I* could misinterpret or commit an error in terms of confirming his understanding of the other's experience since the content of the empathized experience is given to the empathizing *I* non-primordially.

As an individual empathizes with another *I*, his interpretation of the experience of the other *I* and himself, is referred to his experience and he "relates" this to the other's own experience. "Nowhere in her dissertation does Stein argue that empathy yields universal or even consistently accurate understanding of another's experience."³³ Here, the empathizing *I* must become mindful of the verbal and nonverbal languages expressed by the other in order to reach a more accurate interpretation of the empathized experience. "When I empathize the pain of the injured in looking at a wound, I tend to look at his face to have my experience confirmed in his expression of suffering."³⁴ The empathizer can also become aware how other people perceive him to be. An individual becomes more self-aware by viewing how other people must feel when they encounter him. Understanding others' experiences, highlights empathy as essential to intersubjectivity.

Intersubjectivity refers an individual's experience, as an embodied subjectivity, of another individual within the stream of experience. Being part of the stream of experience, the person is *evidently present* alongside others. Transitioning from one experience to another, the individual may find that other individuals have already been present within any experience that he enters. It could be said that within the stream of experience, a person is *presently in, has been from, and will be in*, an experience alongside others. Stein's analysis of empathy provides a diverse discussion of the nature of intersubjectivity.³⁵ "The access to the experience of the other allows me to identify the world of values – the objects of motivation the 'we' which arises from the sharing of motivational energy and gives rise to communal experience."³⁶

By being able to go beyond one's own individuality and reaching out to others and understanding them not as objects but as fellow subjects, the empathizing person is capable of establishing a relationship that is based on open *acceptance* and *approval* of the other's unique and genuine personhood. These things are needed within the community, inasmuch as a community is formed by values that have been perceived by individuals from others and their own selves through empathy.

³² Ibid, 61.

³³ Kukar, Polina. "The Very Unrecognizability of the Other": Edith Stein, Judith Butler, and the Pedagogical Challenge of Empathy." *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 2016: 7.

³⁴ Ibid, 85.

³⁵ Lebech, Mette. *The Philosophy of Edith Stein: From Phenomenology to Metaphysics*. Leuven: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2015. 26.

³⁶ Ibid, 41.

Stein on the Individual and the Community

The ideas discussed here are primarily culled from Stein's Second Treatise in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, though some discussions on causality and motivation from the first treatise are included. Stein's discussion on the nature of the individual is briefly discussed first. The second part of the discussion focuses Stein's philosophical analysis of community.

The Individual

Stein believed that the individual is "ontologically prior"³⁷ to any community. Stein asserted that each individual has four phenomenological layers by which experience is accessed: (1) the physical layer; (2) the sentient (or sensate) layer; (3) the mental layer; and (4) the personal layer. The Physical layer refers to the physical body. The sentient layer refers to the living body, that could be understood as one's sensory perception and reaction to whatever one experiences through his physical body. Stein asserted that the sentient layer is powered by the individual's lifepower. Using this metaphor, Stein described the energy fueling individuals, and their sensate layer. Lifepower can be increased or decreased by an individual's actions.

*The fact that powers are supplied to or withdrawn from lifepower is a 'cause' of the sensate occurrence. The 'effect' consists in the alteration of other sensate properties ... For example, receptivity for colors can be neither enhanced nor diminished by receptivity for sounds. but can be enhanced together by an increase of lifepower.*³⁸

To illustrate this, take for example, Jack who is invited to watch a recently released movie he has been looking forward to watch. However, on this particular day, Jack's lifepower is "low," then, he might not be ecstatic about the prospect of having to watch said movie. Due to Jack's "low" lifepower, his reaction to the "exciting" news may not reflect elation. The Lifepower functions under the laws of causation wherein Jack's "low" lifepower caused his lack of joy. To account for the relations between actions, Stein distinguished causality from motivation. The former involves causal relations of actions characterized by necessary connections of events. Motivation "is a coherence of meaning in which experiences cannot coincide randomly."³⁹ These involve actions that are not necessarily tied or connected to events because they are carefully thought about and willingly chosen by the doer. "Causality is blind occurring while motivation is insightful doing."⁴⁰ For Stein, both the physical and the sentient layers function under causal laws. The mental and personal layers function under motivation.

³⁷ Layug, Jose Adriand Emmanuel L. "St. Karol Wojtyla And St. Edith Stein On Human Individuality: "Pausing At The Irreducible" And Why Think About It." *Philosophia International Journal Of Philosophy* Vol. 21, No. Special Issue (2020): 395.

³⁸ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 45.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 122.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*,70.

The third layer is the mental layer, the seat of meaning and intellectual thought that enables individuals to understand “how and why [an] event occurred.”⁴¹ The fourth layer is the personal layer which functions according to motivation and is the realm of freedom, the will, and the seat of one’s core personality and affective self. “The personal realm ... is properly the center of the person and the center of free choices ... although conditioned by sentient causality and directed by motives, it nonetheless retains its distinctiveness.”⁴² This core personality, according to Stein, is a permanent core within a person from which all of his qualities gradually unfold yet the core itself remains unchanged. The personal core, as a “formative root,”⁴³ has innate predispositions that eventually “guide” or “direct” a person’s unfolding “in the unity of the person’s soul, mind, and body, and somehow ‘colors’ the human person’s perception of the world.”⁴⁴ There is a possibility that the core does not completely manifest and/or unfold itself due to certain circumstances (e.g. death, bodily defect, etc.). It is also possible for one to be unaware of his personal core or maybe even deny it – hindering its complete unfolding. It is also conceivable for the personality core to not unfold at all, such that as the case of a person who does not feel nor experience values himself but encounters them through others.⁴⁵

The personality core is open to the realm of values. The personal layer of the individual is only conditioned by causal laws while directed by motivation, hence, it can be said that what motivates an individual to behave and unfold in a certain way is due to those values that he/she prioritizes and “values.” For Stein, the individual may prioritize negatively valued deeds more than positive ones. Individuals are also capable of suppressing the tendency of his personal layer to unfold in a way that he prioritizes negatively valued deeds rather than positive ones. Given the permanency of the personality core, one can only direct himself and be more open to positive values rather than negative ones. Stein writes:

Any work on yourself, any efforts toward a cleansing of your soul can consist only in this: to suppress negatively valued deeds and stirrings of your soul and to combat the disposition to them, or even not to let them arise, and conversely to hold yourself open for positive values.⁴⁶

Values motivate attitudes, actions, and feelings. Emotions are responses to values. Stein asserted that values have an objective hierarchy that can be a basis for evaluating the level by which it is felt. This reveals something about a person – harkening back to the susceptibility of one’s core to unfold his “preference” or inclination to be motivated by negative values more than positive values and vice versa. Individuals can be characterized by their values. One can know someone when one sees the values they respond to, choose to live by, and which guides their actions or goals.⁴⁷ Individuals can have a distorted sense of values, evident in their emotional reactions to experiences. This may indicate that the person unfolded to be more

⁴¹ Borden, *Edith Stein*, 33.

⁴² *Ibid*, 36.

⁴³ Layug, "St. Karol Wojtyła And St. Edith Stein On Human Individuality," 394.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 395.

⁴⁵ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 111.

⁴⁶ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 265.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 260.

receptive to negative values rather than positive ones. If a person were deeply bothered by not being given a reward for doing a good job at school; but is unbothered at all when seeing someone being discriminated against, then “[t]he person has misunderstood the value of each and her emotional reactions indicate a distortion.”⁴⁸ If any unfolding is to occur in the person, it should “include the formation of a rightly ordered value hierarchy ... the development of right emotional responses to value.”⁴⁹ Such failings are not just mere accidents of one’s lives. Individuals need to open themselves and be active to receiving values. A failure to *properly* value something is a failure to appropriately receive real value.⁵⁰ If an individual is not receptive to positive values or if he is more receptive to a distorted sense of value, he might suppress the tendency of his personality core to unfold its positive characteristic traits. All these comes into play in Stein’s analysis of the community, which is comprised of individuals with their own unique personality cores.

The Community

The individual is a being in communion with others. A significant part of the person’s self-knowledge comes to him via from others empathy. Furthermore, essential to the sentient layer of the individual is their drawing of their lifepower energy from themselves and others. Human beings are naturally inclined to “reach out beyond themselves toward a complete unification.”⁵¹ For Stein, a community is a “natural and organic union of individuals,”⁵² in contrast to an association which is “rational and mechanical.”⁵³ A community involves intersubjective relations that require open commitment to and “living” in the shared world with its members: “where a subject accepts the other as a subject ... lives with him, and is determined by the stirrings of his life.”⁵⁴ It aims to promote the well-being of its members unlike other groups who have more external goals.

For Stein, pure communities are possible whereas pure associations are not, because associations can be derived from and is presupposed by communities.⁵⁵ Stein believes that communal unions involve communal experiences, which are not just similarities between members’ experiences. Communal experiences come about when there is an openness to other persons as subjects and they *share* an experience.⁵⁶ A person perceives and understands an experience as something he shares with his fellow community members which *means* something to them as a community. Individuals may not share the same experience of the event, but understand it as a

⁴⁸ Borden, *Edith Stein*, 39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵¹ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 317.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

⁵⁵ Borden, *Edith Stein*, 48.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

shared experience. Communal experiences are neither just the sum of the experiences of the individual members of the community. Communal experiences “arise out of individual experiences”⁵⁷ and do so in a way that it is not just *my* experience, but *our* experience. For example, in losing a loved one, you may share in the grief with your relatives. Such a sharing of experience is not a matter of addition of experiences but experiencing loss as one’s own individual experience, then realizing and feeling its meaning to the community. Individuals come to understand that it was not just *I* who lost a loved one nor is it just *them* who lost a loved one; but that *WE* lost a loved one and the emotional impact is shared with community members.

Communities require members to remain open to their fellow subjects and the shared experience within the community. For Stein, a genuinely true community entails a shared world where members possess and share values, common life, common sources, and the influence and trigger of similar motives. Communities, like individuals, have layers to access experience. At the mental level, individual members of the community share the *meaning* of common experiences and how they understand such to be empirical. Meaning is accessible to everyone, especially in a community. “When I understand my private sensory experience to be caused by something real, I understand it precisely as the sort of experience that another person could have.”⁵⁸ For example, through one’s sense of sight, one perceives a black laptop in front of him as an object. Even if one’s friends experience the laptop differently from him (e.g. due to an eye defect), they still *share* the same meaning in his experience of the laptop, perceiving that the laptop IS an object in front of them. This applies to values as well according to Stein. For example, Mr. E may value fairness in terms of following line queues and waiting for his turn to ride public transport – so much so, that if he sees someone cut in line, the value he’s prioritized may motivate him to be disappointed. This value can likewise be shared by other passengers who may have similar reactions of disappointment as Mr. E towards the one who cut in line. The value that has been placed on fairness is not just one’s own experience anymore, but something shared with others. The unity of communal experiences is due to “sense-content accessible to a plurality of subjects.”⁵⁹

At the sensient level, the community has its own lifepower that its individual members can contribute to and feed off. Lifepower can be transferred through different means. “[T]he meaning of a poem can be converted into sensient lifepower and provide energy for ... people.”⁶⁰ For Stein, being in the physical presence of another and sharing lifepower with them is a stronger way of sharing. For example, an individual who is tired with working could be reinvigorated by “[m]erely knowing that [his] friend now is ... industriously at work ... in front of [him] and [he] ‘catches wind of the mental vigor that ... [he] feels [himself] is stirred by it, too.’”⁶¹ Individuals can all contribute to one another and shape each other in the community.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Borden, *Edith Stein*, 51.

⁵⁹ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 186.

⁶⁰ Borden, *Edith Stein*, 53.

⁶¹ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 186.

The presence of another person prevents certain stirrings from coming over me that would just go ahead and run their course if I were left on my own, while other stirrings are induced in me which I wouldn't be capable of at all on my own ... Because a person's conditions have an influence upon the development of her properties ... contributing to the formation of her character too.

Stein mentions that a community has a lifepower reserve that can “energize” and be replenished by community members to varying degrees. Stein warns of suggestive ways of sharing meanings and ideas, particularly negative ones. She believed that some ideas and meanings are subtly transferred to community members, and they simply accept such ideas and meanings without question. This can be problematic and that “there can be more appropriate and less appropriate ways of taking over convictions, and they must also consider their own ‘susceptibility’ to certain convictions.”⁶² For example, younger members of a family would simply accept the norms and beliefs given to them by their older relatives simply because the relatives are older and are perceived to be “wiser.” These could likely influence how an individual unfolds his core personality, and through which, could influence others within a community to unfold a more problematic kind of shared values that could likewise influence the shared meaning and the quality of the lifepower of the community. This is evident with the dangers and impact of discrimination in society. It can begin within an individual and eventually influence others to engage in such horrible acts. For example, in Jane Elliott’s⁶³ class lesson, she quickly saw how the students became discriminatory towards their peers when one group was told that they were better than others simply because of their eye color. LGBT community members are likewise discriminated because other members of society have been molded to wrongly accept that being gay, bisexual, etc. is wrong and/or abnormal. These acts are made worse when authority figures encourage it:

“Marisol D., a ... transgender woman, said: ‘When I was in high school, there was a teacher who always went around and if you had long hair, she would call you up to the front of the class and cut your hair in front of the students. That happened to me many times. It made me feel terrible.’”⁶⁴

Here, one could see that being taught or even just exposed to meanings and ideas within the community could subtly influence how an individual’s core personality will unfold. This is why, the value of being inclusive should guide the motive of individuals and eventually guide their unfolding towards a more inclusive characteristic trait, so that it becomes part of the community’s shared world, meanings, and lifepower.

Stein on the individual and the community vis-à-vis inclusivity

⁶² Borden, *Edith Stein*, 55.

⁶³ See FRONTLINE PBS Official YouTube Channel. A Class Divided (Full Film). January 19, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE (accessed August 24, 2020).

⁶⁴ Thoreson, "Just Let Us Be" Discrimination Against LGBT Students in the Philippines, 2017.

Discrimination is a harsh reality. Amidst centuries of efforts to make society and the world more inclusive, there are still people being discriminated against. Stein's notions on individual and community provides ideas and insights that can be used to build on discourses of inclusivity and could even be considered as a philosophy of inclusion in itself. Stein, after all, "through both the written and spoken word, as well as by her example, was and remains a proponent of wholesome human community and a voice for the social change."⁶⁵

Empathy is a significant first step to a more inclusive society. When the empathizer can perceive the experience of discrimination of another, somehow, the empathizer may have an idea of what the victim is experiencing and feeling as well as the perpetrator. Through empathy, one might glimpse into the individual's values realm, where they could "perceive" possible motivations he has for behaving discriminatorily. One might also reflectively check themselves if they are discriminating others. This might aid in correcting individuals' behaviors and perspectives. However, it takes more than merely understanding others' experiences to truly promote inclusivity. Even if a person were to try and understand another, but is unable or maybe even unwilling to acknowledge the dignity and value of the other, inclusivity may never really prosper. Inclusivity should be part of the life of the society and of its members.

In Stein's philosophy of the individual and the community, initially, one could say that discrimination is not exactly a societal problem per se, but is a problem within individuals. For Stein, individuals have a permanent and unchanging core personality which is the seat and origin of their characteristic traits and qualities that is open to their values realm; and which may gradually unfold itself to varying degrees. The individual is susceptible to swayed to prioritize either negatively valued or positively valued deeds. If an individual were to have a distorted sense of values that he ends up wrongfully valuing his sense of being superior over others instead of being more inclusive and non-discriminative; then, his core may unfold a tendency to be discriminatory. But if he were to be exposed to experiences that could help him choose and prioritize appropriate values and positively valued deeds, like being more inclusive and accepting of other people; then, it is likelier that he be motivated to be more inclusive. This can even be reinforced when he empathizes with others, especially those who experienced discrimination.

*Racism is an individual problem ... [s]ocieties are made up of individuals. If we could educate individuals in this society to change their behavior and to change their language, we could change the level of racism ... Nobody is born a racist. You have to be taught to be a racist.*⁶⁶

Being taught, could be understood as being exposed to experiences and phenomena that could sway one's core to possibly suppress the unfolding of negative values, and/or to allow the unfolding of positive values. This could be related with

⁶⁵ Maskulak, Marian. "Edith Stein: A Proponent of Human Community and A Voice for Social Change." *Logos* XV, no. 2 (2012): 81.

⁶⁶ Fotuhi, Omid. Jane Elliott - A Conversation about Race, Racism, and Education in America. May 24, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCANUQ2oMgn7jeTh4XAzZH0Q> (accessed May 4, 2022).

the impressionability of children. Children, could be said to be within the early stages of unfolding their characteristic traits from their core. Their unfolding will highly depend on their susceptibility to be swayed towards valuing or preferring either positive or negative values and deeds because of the things happening around them. In Elliot's classroom experiment, she noted how quickly her third-grade students demonstrated discriminative behavior towards their classmates: "I watched wonderful, thoughtful children turn into nasty, vicious, discriminating little third-graders."⁶⁷ Such a susceptibility towards a preference for negative valued deeds is not merely a fault of the individual, since, as Stein argues, individuals develop within a community.

"We find communities 'out there in life.' But we find them within us as well, for we live as their members."⁶⁸ An individual is very much influenced by the goings-on in his community inasmuch as the collective and shared life of individuals is what gave rise to the community. "The human individual depends ... on his community ... [T]he community can be traced back to its members."⁶⁹ Community members are can understand each other's perspective about the world around them, and even share in the meanings and values of the community, whilst not losing their own individuality. "The core personality is the root principle why the human individual in a community cannot possibly be absorbed by all-encompassing communal experiences."⁷⁰ This is particularly interesting to consider in relation to inclusivity.

When an individual becomes part of a community, they are eventually exposed to other individuals with their own cores: who have their own perception and priorities when it comes to the hierarchy of values. This influences the way they view the world and their motives for actions. For example, Person A, has a core that is yet to unfold, but is now being exposed to a community of individuals whose cores unfolded in a way that they have a distorted sense of values, motivating them to discriminate other peoples who don't belong to their community. Person A, might end up being influenced by such a community to be motivated to behave in a similar manner.

On the other hand, the presence of discriminatory individuals in society may lead others to become the same. For example, what if Person A belongs to an inclusive community. But then, one day he starts hanging out with Person B who is very discriminatory towards Asians. For Stein "the human person's core personality ... is never removed even within the context of community, no matter how intense the communal experience is."⁷¹ As such, whatever character trait has unfolded from

⁶⁷ See FRONTLINE PBS Official YouTube Channel. A Class Divided (Full Film). January 19, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE (accessed August 24, 2020).

⁶⁸ Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 225.

⁶⁹ Layug, "St. Karol Wojtyła And St. Edith Stein on Human Individuality," 395.

⁷⁰ Layug, "St. Karol Wojtyła And St. Edith Stein on Human Individuality," 395.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 395-396.

one's core, will not be so easily suppressed. In this case, one could say that even if Person B is in an inclusive community and mingles with individuals who are kind and inclusive towards people of other races, Person B's tendency to be discriminatory may not be suppressed so easily. In addition, if Person A is consistently exposed to Person B and his discriminatory behavior, it is likely that Person A's inclusive behavior may be suppressed. As Stein writes, "[i]t's the individuals whose mental doing is constitutive for the world of the community."⁷²

Concerning the community lifepower, it can be recalled that for Stein, the community's lifepower can be transferred in a variety of ways. A song can inspire someone to continue facing life amidst many adversities. In this example, the musical piece is converted into sentient lifepower that energizes people. Furthermore, the proximity of one's fellow individual community members demonstrating productive acts fueled by the community's lifepower, can motivate and reinvigorate an individual to do the same. One could say that innovative approaches to incorporate and emphasize the value and attitude of inclusivity should be an essential part of the lifepower of the community. This could take the form of artistic expressions that could inspire individuals to unfold their core personality to prefer more inclusive deeds in their actions. Education and lessons on inclusivity, could be converted to sentient lifepower, so long as it inspires and energizes individual students to act in a more inclusive way. "Early childhood education has the potential to expand opportunities for disadvantaged children, provided that programmes use inclusion as a guiding principle. ... [E]ducators must be given the knowledge, training, and support to implement inclusive practices and work with families from all backgrounds."⁷³ Modeling more inclusive behaviors to people, could also be a possible course of action.

The children in school ... do not need merely what we have but rather what we are ... The entire educational process must be carried out with love

The most effective educational method is not the word of instruction but the living example without which, all words remain useless.⁷⁴

Experiential learning activities that could train one's capacity for empathy could also be helpful in fostering inclusivity in individuals, especially if simply parroting school lessons becomes unhelpful. Elliot states: "I knew that it was time to deal with this in a concrete way and not just talk about it. Because we had talked about racism, since the first day of school."⁷⁵ These approaches are just suggestions and are not perfect solutions. Much work needs to be done in promoting and fostering more inclusive practices, meanings, ideas, values, and norms in a society – in a world – where discrimination in many forms is still present.

⁷² Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, 226.

⁷³ UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report. Right from the start: build inclusive societies through inclusive early childhood education. Policy Paper, UNESCO, 2021.

⁷⁴ Stein, Edith. *The Collected Works of Edith Stein: Essays on Woman*. 2nd Revised. Translated by Freda Mary Oben. Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987. 6.

⁷⁵ See FRONTLINE PBS Official YouTube Channel. A Class Divided (Full Film). January 19, 2019. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE (accessed August 24, 2020).

Conclusion

The presence of discrimination in its various forms is and should still be an issue that should be of utmost concern and should be addressed. Engaging in discourses to come up with ideas, insights, and ways on how to better understand the reality of discrimination and inclusion as well as how to properly address such are needed if society hopes to foster inclusivity. Stein's philosophy on the individual and the community provides relevant and critical insights that can possibly guide individuals in doing just that. An individual has much of an impact on his community and its members, as they impact him. If humanity truly wants to be a more inclusive society and world, individuals need to have an understanding of the values people have that motivate them to behave the way that they are and see how both the individual and the community mutually influence one another, so that appropriate measures can be taken so that the unfolding of individuals' core personalities will lead them to value and promote inclusivity instead of becoming discriminatory.

There is a need to ensure that within the community itself, the idea of inclusivity should be a part of the shared values, meanings, and lifepower of the community that should constantly and explicitly be reiterated and practiced. If society is to be more inclusive, then everyone must also continue to strive to be a genuine community – one that is engaged in intersubjective relations that is inclusive and respectful of all peoples. Philosophy, indeed has a very significant role to play in fostering inclusivity in society and in the world. Stein's philosophy is but one among many that can contribute to discourses on a philosophy of inclusion. Inasmuch as Philosophy teaches persons to pursue and desire what is true, good, and beautiful; it must also, teach and guide everyone to be empathic and inclusive.

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