1961

From Finite to Eternal Being: Edith Stein's Philosophical Approach to God

Kathe Granderath
_Loyola University Chicago_

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the Philosophy Commons

**Recommended Citation**
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1581

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1961 Kathe Granderath
FROM FINITE TO ETERNAL BEING
EDITH STEIN'S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO GOD

by

Käthe Granderath

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

June
1961
Käthe Granderath was born in Harff/ Bez. Köln, Germany, March 5, 1936.

She was graduated from Neusprachliches Gymnasium in Bergheim/Erft, Germany, April 1956, and subsequently followed a year of missionary training at the Center of the International Catholic Auxiliaries in Brussels, Belgium. From September 1957 to June 1959, she attended Saint Xavier College in Chicago, Illinois, and was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

She began her graduate studies at Loyola University in September 1959.
This study does not give a systematic exposition of Edith Stein's philosophy. Its aim is a presentation of Stein's philosophizing on the unfolding of the meaning of being, leading from limited beings of the existential and essential realm to the fullness of infinite and eternal Being. The textual references have been selected in view of this purpose. Of necessity, the investigation must disregard many important philosophical problems which Edith Stein approached in a way different from her predecessors in the history of philosophy. Yet the study on her ascent to the meaning of being tries to grasp the central ideas of her thinking and to present them in a limited relationship to traditional Catholic and to contemporary existential and phenomenological thinking.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Biographical statement — Judaism, atheism, phenomenology, christianity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Philosophical background and position of E. Stein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her relation to Edmund Husserl — Thomas Aquinas — Martin Heidegger —</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quest for being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Stein's ontology as fusion between two ways of philosophizing — The search for truth and the way to God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. TEMPORAL LIMITATION OF FINITE BEING</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Existential knowledge of one's own being as starting point in the quest for being — Augustine — Descartes — Husserl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Finite being and time</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority of the present — Punctual actuality and the need for expansion — The existential movement and the phases of time — Heidegger's priority of the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Need for a dimension of duration</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology versus phenomenology — experience-units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Revelation of Being through the present</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englobing capacity of present actuality — Height of actuality in the present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. LIMITATION OF THE EGO</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Excellence of the Ego as enduring and encompassing Its vital character — relation to world and others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Limitation of the Ego</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitoriness and thrownness of man's being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Attainment of Being by participation and causality 38
  Amplification of finite perfections —
  Reception of being — Anxiety and nothingness —
  Reason and faith

IV. LIMITATION OF ESSENTIAL BEING 44

A. The nature of essentialities
  Temporality and finiteness — Meaning-structures —
  Their ontological status, compared to Avicenna, Duns
  Scotus, Jean Héring — Their relation to the spatio­
  temporal world

B. The knowledge of essentialities 51
  The phenomenological method of intuition —
  Sense knowledge and eidetic vision

C. The mode of essential being 55
  Constitution of essences —
  Independence of time — Limitation: no efficacy
  and no actualizing capacity — Archetypes within
  the eternal Logos

V. THE FULLNESS OF BEING 61

A. Communionality of essential and existential being —
  The transcendentals as formal dimensions —
  aliquid, res, unum

B. Transcendence of formal ontology by relation to know-
  ing spirit 64
  Essential and transcendental truth — Revealedness as
  mark of all being — The transcendentals as aspects
  of fullness

C. Fullness of Being 68
  Multiplicity unified in Perfect Being — Eternal
  identity of essence and existence — No limitations —
  Divine knowledge and ideas — Name of God — Fullness
  of Being in Person

VI. RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION 76

A. Unfolding of the meaning of being within the essential
  and the existential realm
  The fullness of Being as the origin of the unfol-
  ding — Unfolding under the aspects of finiteness,
  in timelessness and into space and time

B. Stein's position 80
  Combination of the essentialist and the existen-
  tialist position — The role of God — Limitation
  versus fullness — The "fall" and the corresponding
  distortion of things — Heidegger
C. Comparison of Stein's and Heidegger's ontologies...

For Heidegger, being depends on human existence, is determined by time — Horizontal search for being —
For Stein, human existence depends on being — Being determines time, depends on man for knowledge — Vertical search for being

D. Stein's synthesis...
Her hierarchical ontology — Inclusion of all aspects of being — Excellence of man possessing existential awareness and comprehension of being — Stein's advance of phenomenology beyond Husserl and Heidegger

BIBLIOGRAPHY
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The greatness of a philosopher depends to a large extent on the conviction with which he lives his own philosophizing. The truly existential dimension of philosophy is evident in his personal commitment to the search for truth. This dimension is particularly important if the philosophizing concerns the most vital problem of man's life: the relationship to the Infinite God. This problem transcends the speculative order of philosophy, since knowledge of the truth demands an existential engagement in the service of Truth as the most radical consequence in one's personal life.

For an understanding of the German-philosopher-Carmelite Edith Stein, the interrelationship between her life and her philosophy seems extremely important. Her short life (1891-1942) was itself a search for Truth. She hoped to find truth in the world of learning, and ultimately found God in and through her work in phenomenology. The important steps in her life imply the developmental progression from her Jewish background through the phases of atheism, phenomenology, and Christianity to the culmination of her search for truth and the total giving of herself in the Carmel of Cologne. Each of these phases deserves some consideration, since much of Stein's philoso-

---

phical endeavor will gain in clarity by an understanding of her own life situation.

The role of Judaism in E. Stein's childhood and adolescence is less of personal than of social importance. The Jewish religion represented to her a system of customs and conventions, and this might be the reason why she had to go through a period of atheism before finding God. Judaism entangled her like a self-contained system the boundaries of which she had to penetrate even before she recognized the goal toward which her search should lead. She had to shake off everything that enclosed her in this conventional world in order to reach a standpoint from which she could exercise her freedom. Several hundred years earlier, René Descartes found himself in a parallel situation when he decided upon the upheaval of all his former opinions and attachments in order to make a new start in the search for truth. And her contemporary, Henri Bergson emphasized the necessary transition from static to dynamic religion, from the traditional limiting system to the vital experience that leads to the encounter with Being.

Edith Stein left her Jewish world. Yet she had been a Jew, and according to her close friend and phenomenologist Hedwig Conrad-Martius, this implies something more than a mere religious affiliation. She possessed the Jewish mentality which seems to produce a particular intellectual approach to reality, one marked by objectivity and radicalism. Such an attitude provides a natural path into the world of phenomenology. For there, an absolute readiness to give oneself to the object under inquiry is necessary. This implies the exclusion of all prejudice determined by traditional know-
Besides the Jewish influence on Stein's intellectual development, Judaism shaped her whole life and hastened its end. As a Carmelite nun, she offered her life for the Jewish people, and not much later shared the fate of so many of her people when she died in the gas-chambers of Auschwitz in 1942, victim to the racism of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany, victim to the world of violence, hatred, and untruth.

Between the abandonment of the Jewish religion and the active commitment to truth — between the static immobility and the dynamic force — E. Stein lived through a period of atheism. This phase was a short but vital one in her life, since it furnished her with the possibility of a transition from Nothing to Being. It gives the existential impact to her quest for the meaning of being and makes her philosophizing extremely real for the contemporary world, since she speaks through the authenticity of her own life. This might be one of the reasons why modern man can look to Edith Stein as a bridge between an atheistic and a Christian philosophy. Atheism, however, is not by its very nature opposed to truth. For Stein it was a period of search, of great intellectual activity, of her first steps into the world of philosophy.

In the School of Edmund Husserl, she found her philosophical home, and in the language of the phenomenologists her philosophical mother tongue.

---


Her encounter with Husserl and through him with phenomenology was of decisive influence on her life and thought. This meeting "was doubtlessly the one of most consequence, both intellectually and spiritually. Husserl's philosophical method was the one method which could best prepare her to welcome the absolute and divine Other at the time of her conversion. Husserl's exceptional influence seems to be due to the fact that he was that very rare philosopher who fully possesses the 'philosophic faith' and lives the philosophical vocation in all its fullness."4

It is a striking fact that many of Husserl's students were led to ultimate decisions through their radical commitment to this way of philosophizing. Conrad-Martius, herself one of these students, states that in the phenomenological circle the soil was prepared "for the knowledge of transcendences, revelations, of divine things and of God himself, for ultimate religious decisions ..." The existence of the 'beyond' somehow influenced all phenomenologists; they suddenly realized the essence of that world, as the essence of so many other things.5 Phenomenology as a method of minute descriptive analyses is marked by an absolute objectivity and honesty. These analyses prepare the way for the knowledge of things, the "intuition of essences," and consequently for the knowledge of God. From its very beginning, this philosophical orientation contained a "longing to find a way back to objectivity, to the sacredness of being, to the purity of things, to

4André Devaux, "Vocation in the Life and Thought of Edith Stein," Philosophy Today (1958), II, 173.
5Conrad-Martius, p. 40.
Husserl, the master of phenomenology, did not himself conquer subjectivism, but many of his students followed the original intention of the phenomenological school in its openness towards objects, ultimately leading to Being itself. The common search of phenomenologists was one for objective reality. Thus Husserl's withdrawal into subjectivism came as a complete surprise and provoked unending discussion in the circle of his students. Stein thinks that it was perhaps "this very opposition to the beginnings of his new idealism, that pushed Husserl still further in the same direction." His students, however, had found in the phenomenological method a key to unlock reality and to penetrate to the essence of things.

The influence of Husserl is evident in the whole of Edith Stein's philosophizing. Trying to elucidate the relationship of her own investigations to Husserl's thinking, she admits that the extent of this influence can no longer be delineated. Since Stein was his assistant in the preparation of various publications, all his manuscripts were available to her. These manuscripts and the many conversations with Husserl offered a profound stimulation to Stein as a member of the phenomenological community, and she acknowledged the decisive influence on her own works.

The only available information by Husserl about his assistant is his

---

6 Franz Hillig, "Edith Stein," Stimmen der Zeit (Freiburg, 1949-50), CXXXV, 34.
appreciation of her intellectual qualities and philosophical maturity, which is evident in his recommendation of Stein for a teaching assignment to Göttingen University. In that recommendation, he mentions the interest roused among experts by Stein's excellent doctoral dissertation on "empathy", and the valuable cooperation she gave him in his work as academic teacher.

"For this purpose, she used to give philosophical courses which were attended not only by beginners, but also by more advanced students. The achievements of my Husserl's students in my own courses as well as their personal testimony assured me of the excellent results of this cooperation. Dr. Stein has gained a far-reaching as well as profound philosophical knowledge, and is unquestionable well qualified for independent scholarly research and teaching." This statement of the master of phenomenology himself attests the excellent philosophical qualities of Edith Stein, which can be judged and appreciated by her own writings.

As a phenomenologist, Stein discovered truth and found the fulfillment of her search in the Catholic faith. It was then that she entered the world of Christian philosophy and was confronted with the problem of a possible synthesis between medieval and contemporary thinking. Her first contact with the world of scholasticism was her reading of St. Thomas' Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate and the translation of this work into the German language. In her preface to the translation, Stein points out that this direct confrontation with Thomistic thought was a necessary way for her to

---

penetrate into the world of Thomas.\textsuperscript{10} Grabmann states in his introductory comments that Stein possesses the qualities of a competent translator, who can approach the study of scholastic thought from the perspective of modern philosophy and thus contribute to the modern reader's understanding of St. Thomas.\textsuperscript{11} This work is thus not an exact word by word translation, but a "transposition" into Stein's own way of thinking and the corresponding forms of expression after having absorbed and assimilated the thought of Aquinas.\textsuperscript{12} E. Przywara,\textsuperscript{13} S/J/ sees the value of such a transposition in the fact that it intensifies the vitality of Thomism: Thomistic thought must transcend its traditional field of tension between Platonism-Augustinianism and Aristotelianism in a confrontation with contemporary thinking. Stein's work enters this path: "On every page it is Thomas and only Thomas, but in such a way that he stands face to face with Husserl, Scheler, and Heidegger. The phenomenological vocabulary which E. Stein, as creative philosopher, can call her own has nowhere taken the place of St. Thomas' language; and yet, doors open without effort between the two worlds."\textsuperscript{13} Also A. Koyré appreciates the value of Stein's very original and yet very faithful translation as the revelation of a living Thomism: an enterprise which a priori he would have


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 457.

\textsuperscript{13} "Thomas von Aquien deutsch", \textit{Stimmen der Zeit} (Freiburg, 1931), CXXI, 385-386.
judged dangerous if not impossible, but which justifies itself in its perfection and manifests such a thorough understanding of Thomism that the Latin text becomes transparent beneath the German.\textsuperscript{14} Josef Pieper's evaluation is somewhat more negative when he points out the difficulty "for a mind trained in modern philosophy to grasp the fundamental ideas of an old ontology."\textsuperscript{15}

For Edith Stein, these two philosophical worlds demanded a confrontation. She made a first attempt to express their most obvious similarities and differences in a comparison of the philosophies of Aquinas and Husserl.\textsuperscript{16} Her greatest difficulty in understanding Thomas concerns his methods: since through her training in phenomenology she had been accustomed to attack philosophical problems \textit{ab ovo}, she was 'puzzled' before a procedure that used the weight of authority to prove a point, namely passages from Scripture, quotations of the Fathers, or theses of ancient philosophers. But the thorough study of St. Thomas convinced her that one \textit{can} arrive at the organon of Thomistic basic concepts and theses by interrelating his various works and thus discovering his world of thought, and especially by grasping the reasons for his procedure. Only to be conquered in such a way by Thomas would mean to conquer him philosophically for oneself.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{14}"Philosophie Medi\'evale", cited in \textit{Untersuchungen} pp. 465-66.
\item \textsuperscript{15}Pieper cited in Graef, p. 52.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Edith Stein, "Husserl's Ph"{a}nomenologie und die Philosophie des hl. Thomas von Aquino", \textit{Festschrift, E/Husserl zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet} (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1929).
\item \textsuperscript{17}Stein, pp. 489-90. (References to "Stein" without further specification concern her \textit{Endliches und Ewiges Sein}).
\end{enumerate}
This positive approach requires an openness to Truth, a willingness to search for truths wherever they can be found and to conquer them step by step. Edith Stein is looking for a "transhistorical" truth, as opposed to Przywara's attempts to follow the innerhistorical laws of philosophical development. Her training inclined her to a "direct rethinking of the matter in its theoretical immediacy, with history playing a minor role." These different approaches to the same problem manifest different attitudes of mind all of which can contribute to the gradual discovery of transhistorical truth. 18 This also clarifies her understanding of philosophia perennis as the spirit of philosophizing that lives in every true philosopher, one who "is irresistibly driven by an inner necessity to seek after the logos or ratio of this world." 19

Edith Stein's approach requires the "return to things" that Heidegger demanded as a foundation for philosophy. She entered scholasticism through phenomenology. When she came to know the metaphysics of St. Thomas, her restless mind searched for a possible synthesis between the modern intuition of essences (Wesensschau) and the old ontology (Seinslehre). Her major philosophical work, Endliches und Ewiges Sein, manifests her concern with such a fusion. Long was the way from the atheist to the Carmelite philosopher, but it was this way to Being that gave meaning to her life and to her thinking. E. Stein's life and death are a witness to the truth, and her thinking

---

18 James Collins, "Review of Endliches und Ewiges Sein", Modern Schoolman (St. Louis, 1951-52), XXIX, 1:0; Stein, pp. X-XI.

19 Stein, "Husserl's Phänomenologie", p. 316.
gives testimony to the philosophical foundations of her approach to God.

This approach to God is an attempt to ascend to the meaning of being, a commitment to a search that will transcend the boundaries of finiteness and thus attain the Infinite. The quest for being is as old as philosophy itself, the most obvious and yet the most obscure philosophical question. Heidegger presents this problem as one that has been obscured by imposing philosophical systems, but now must be restated and rediscovered by contemporary thinking.  

The question of being seemed to Edith Stein the central problem that could bring together the medieval system of thought, apparently closed upon itself, and the modern way of thinking, open and living. Realizing the tremendous gap between a Christian philosophy in the traditional sense as related to revelation and faith, and the modern philosophy as becoming an autonomous science, Stein considered the return to a concern with being in both of these apparently unreconcilable philosophical orientations as a sign that the study of being alone could harmonize two such different ways of philosophizing. In the beginning of the twentieth century, both Thomistic and modern philosophy were engaged in a vital renewal. Thomism began to be considered as a living structure, promising to come to new life in contemporary Catholic thinking. Modern philosophy, on the other hand, directed its renewed efforts towards that-which-is (Seiendes) in the philosophy of essence of Husserl and Scheler, and the philosophy of existence of Heidegger.

---

and H. Conrad-Martius. Edith Stein met the challenge of a possible fusion by her own development of an ontology in which both directions of thinking should find a place: in which the phenomenological approach and especially the language make it accessible to modern thinkers, but in which the fundamental principles of Thomistic philosophy are maintained and justified.

This ontology presented in *Endliches und Ewiges Sein* acquires its full impact only in comparison to Martin Heidegger's ontology — a quest for being which limits itself to such an extent to an analysis of human existence that the fullness of being can never be attained. E. Stein received a strong impression from Heidegger's early philosophy and treats the differences in their respective ontologies in several comments which "foreshadow the very problems that Heidegger has been meditating upon in subsequent years ... as though his latest period were dictated by her searching questions." 21

Nothing is known about a possible influence of Stein on Heidegger. Stein, however, mentions their personal acquaintance, since Heidegger's approach to phenomenology came about while she was the assistant of Husserl. For her, this was the first encounter with Heidegger's world of thought. She read *Sein und Zeit* shortly after its publication and was deeply impressed by it, without being able at that time "to come to terms" with his thought. While working on her own ontology she became aware of the similarities between Heidegger's and her own approach to the meaning of being. The extensive notes commenting on Heidegger's philosophy show her deep concern for

---

21 Collins, p. 145.
a detailed comparison of these two attempts at clarifying the meaning of being. Only the comments on Heidegger make the reader realize "that there is need for bringing about an understanding between Heidegger and Aquinas, as well as between Husserl and Aquinas." For Stein, time is the distinguishing mark of finite being, and this approach is parallel to Heidegger's preoccupation with the temporal character of finite Dasein. Such a parallelism can be drawn since Heidegger's Dasein and Stein's Self or Ego refer to the same reality, namely to the finite human existence, to man considered under the perspectives of two ways of philosophizing. Stein opposes Heidegger's contention that time provides the means to grasp being by the assertion that being rather gives significance to time. Stein thus offers a fundamental challenge to Heidegger, which at the same time is a challenge to all philosophy without God: can finite being remain closed upon itself or

22 Stein, p. XII.

E. Stein added an appendix on Heidegger's Existentialphilosophie to the manuscript of her work. Unfortunately, this Appendix has not yet been published because of technical difficulties. It would have been helpful for this study, since, according to a comment by the publishers of E. Stein's Werke, it summarizes in the form of quotations those thoughts of Heidegger which Stein then discusses and evaluates in the light of her own philosophizing. It must be noted, however, that Stein is only concerned with the early writings of Heidegger. Hence the development of his ontology as evident in On Humanism is not considered in this investigation.

Trying to get information concerning the availability of the Heidegger-Appendix, the writer of this thesis received notice from Dr. L. Gelber, Archivist at the Husserl Archives in Louvain and co-editor of Stein's Endliches und Ewiges Stein? THAT THE MENTIONED Appendix on Heidegger's Existentialphilosophie will be published in Vol. VI of Stein's Werke, now being prepared for publication in the course of 1961. The work is being done by the "Archivum Carmelitenum Edith Stein" in Louvain, Belgium, Maria-Theresiastraat, 94.

23 Collins, p. 145.
must it transcend its limitations and thus find its roots in Infinite and Eternal Being? The whole philosophy of Edith Stein will be an answer to this problem. The question of the meaning of being is ultimately the question of man's approach to God, which in the case of Stein is answered positively, and in the case of Heidegger negatively or at least hesitatingly. But this problem is the basic one for man's life, and it was chosen as the topic for this study because Edith Stein's philosophical approach to God provides a way that might be a bridge between contemporary phenomenological and existentialist thinking and the traditional proofs for the existence of God.

Edith Stein's total commitment to Being is obvious. In its personal and philosophical aspects, such commitment may assist others in that search which every man has to pursue and to solve in some form or other in his own life. Thus any philosopher's search for being is an implicit search for God. A quotation from a letter of Husserl to Edith Stein is illuminating: "... man's life is nothing but a journey towards God. I have tried to attain the end without the aid of theology, its proofs and methods. In other words, I wanted to reach God without God. I had to eliminate God from my scientific thought, in order to open the way to those who do not know him as you do, by the sure road of faith, passing through the Church ... I am conscious of the danger that such a method entails, and of the risk that I would have taken had I felt myself deeply bound to God, and Christian in the depth of

24Ibid.
my heart ..."25 This note from the hand of the master of phenomenology himself seems to indicate a trait of more than personal relevance. It could apply to any philosopher who is asking the question for the meaning of being without considering the ultimate reality of God. If Edith Stein in her philosophical analyses eventually arrives at the fullness of Being, then only her faith and her conviction allow her to identify Being with the personal and living God, involving a leap beyond an abyss that cannot be explained by philosophy alone. Philosophical investigations can find an answer in the quest for the meaning of being; they can penetrate to the Pure Act and the Cause of contingency. But the identification of this First Principle with the Christian God of Revelation necessitates faith. This necessity is also evident in the Thomistic proofs for the existence of God, where Aquinas reasons to an Unmoved Mover, a first efficient and necessary Cause, a most perfect Being.26 But the recognition of this Principle as "God" cannot be achieved by philosophy alone.

In relation to Stein's approach, Heidegger's analysis of human existence may be a means "to open the way to Being to those who do not know him," yet as Husserl also recognized, it is an extremely dangerous one. Edith Stein also recognized this danger and realized that philosophy is a "continuous walking along the brink of the abyss," that every moment of philosophizing is one of the greatest responsibility for someone who has taken upon himself

---


26 S/T I, 2, 3c.
the search for truth. In his search, the philosopher may come "terribly close to the untrue, for only a knife's edge divides it from the true. But though he may fall into error, darkness, and despair, he may come, on the other hand, to know philosophy's insufficiency and his own, and thus be captured by the living God."²⁷

²⁷Stein cited in Oesterreicher, pp. 335-34.
CHAPTER II

TEMPORAL LIMITATION OF FINITE BEING

The very placing of the question of being already implies a certain
pre-ontological knowledge of being. Diverse paths may be chosen towards
the attainment of the goal of this quest. "It matters little," says Mari­
tain, "whether the intuition of being resemble the innate gift of an impe­
rial intelligence serenely relying upon its limpid strength ...; whether,
alternatively, it spring unexpectedly like a kind of natural grace at the
sight of a blade of grass or a windmill, or at the sudden perception of the
reality of the Self...; whether I make my way towards it by inner experience
of duration, or of anguish, or of certain moral realities which transcend
the flow of time - these alternatives, I repeat, are of slight moment ...
what counts is to have seen that existence is ... a primitive datum for the
mind itself ..."¹ Even though these alternatives be of slight moment, there
is reason enough to give preference to one's own existence rather than that
of things as the point of departure in this quest, because of the peculiar
and unique relationship that the inquiring subject has to his own being.
It is something inescapably close to man, and whenever in his search for
truth he inquires into the possibility of an indubitably certain starting
point, he is brought back to "the fact of his own existence" (die Tatsache

In choosing this starting point, Edith Stein followed the great tradition of introspection as the primary mode of knowledge, which discerned the most certain truth in man's own existence. She explicitly mentions St. Augustine, Descartes, and Husserl in the line of her predecessors. St. Augustine said about the fact of our own life that "in regard to this ... we are absolutely without any fear lest perchance we are being deceived by some resemblance to the truth, since it is certain, that he who is deceived, yet lives ... The knowledge by which we know that we live is the most inward of all knowledge ...".

When Descartes many hundred years later applied the universal doubt to all his previous knowledge in order to establish a sure foundation for the edifice of philosophy, the very fact of doubting and thus of thinking resisted the doubt. Together with the *cogito* he rescued the sum from the uncertainty of doubt, and as clear and distinct idea could make it the first principle of his philosophy.

In a similar way, Edmund Husserl required a suspension of judgment, an *epoché*, towards everything man simply accepts in his "natural attitude". This suspension extends to the existence of the natural world as well as to

---

2Stein, pp. 34-35.


to the validity of science referring to it. Thus for Husserl, only the
field of consciousness remained for investigation: it is unimportant whether
the thing perceived exist in outside reality or not; but the perception as
such and thus the perceiver cannot be denied.5 An "I am" can thus be dis-
cerned in the "life" of Augustine, in the "I think" of Descartes, and in the
"being conscious" of Husserl.6 There is no need for a syllogistic reasoning
process to conclude to the certainty of one's own existence, but this exist-
ence is known with directness and immediacy. It is the only apodictically
certain truth and mirrors the description that Husserl gave to "apodictic
evidence": not only implying the certitude of the existence of something,
but also the absolute inconceivability of its non-existence and therefore
excluding in advance all imaginable doubt as meaningless.7 Such an apodic-
tic evidence only applies to the ego-cogito as the realm on which every
radical philosophy must be founded.8

From the phenomenological school, Edith Stein holds the necessity to
suspend judgment about the total existence of the natural world. In consi-
dering "consciousness" as the primary awareness of the fact of one's own
being, she bases her quest for being upon a genuine and true reflection on

5Edmund Husserl, Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenolo-
GISCHEN Philosophie I, hers. Waletr Biemel (Haag:Martinus Nijhoff, 1950),
* 31-52, pp. 65-69.

6Stein, pp. 35-36.

7Edmund Husserl, Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge, hers.
Dr. S. Strasser (Haag:Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), *6, p. 56.

8Ibid., *3, p. 58.
man's existence. His own being is something closest and most certain to man in an inner experience, presented to his consciousness by a most original (ursprünglich) knowledge. This knowledge has neither a priority of time nor of being over the knowledge of the external world. Evidently it is not first in time, for the "natural" attitude and inclination of man is directed toward the external world, and it often takes a long time to find and know oneself. Also it is not first in the sense of a principle from which all other truths might be deduced logically. But this knowledge is an intuitive awareness that gives "unreflected" certitude, consisting in that thinking by which the mind comes out of its original attitude towards objects in order to look upon itself.\(^9\)

The knowledge of one's own existence is not derived from introspection in the traditional sense of the term — it is not an act subsequent to the act of existing, but it is a certainty lived in the act of existing itself. This approach to the mystery of existence is common to contemporary phenomenology: "What has happened in recent phenomenology is the intensive development of that germ of self-consciousness which we exercise not after the act of existing, but in the very act as it proceeds. It is only by dwelling on this self-consciousness and by bringing it to expression that we may come to know existence as it is in the act."\(^10\) Thus the impossibility

\(^9\)Stein, p. 36.

of expounding a set of rules of how to achieve this awareness is evident. 
E. Stein emphasizes the necessity of the reader's willingness to follow in an 
analysis of existence and to apply it to his own life where it will become 
an existential experience. Thus self-knowledge is opposed to the contempla- 
tion of a "self-point" as an opaque entity. It implies something of that 
illuminative transparency of human existence which Heidegger tries to cap- 
ture in his analysis of Dasein. 11 Man does not obtain a genuine existential 
knowledge without being personally involved in the mystery and aware of exist- 
ence as "ever-mine/" This knowledge is not an objective theory about oneself, 
but a necessary part of one's being, of which man becomes aware in every 
genuine reflection upon his act of existing. Wild points out the importance 
of such an existential knowledge for the growth of philosophy: 

This primordial type of awareness and the life-world which it 
directly reveals have been neglected in our traditional philosophy 
for the sake of that clarity and distinctness which comes only with 
objective reflection. From this it was hoped that existential cer- 
tainty might be achieved. But this hope has been disappointed. The 
rationalist attempt to base all knowledge on clear and distinct ideas 
and principles has ended only in chaos and doubt. Perhaps the time 
has come at last when we shall reverse this procedure, returning to 
our lived experience which reveals itself only vaguely, but with di- 
gressness and certainty. From this concrete starting point we may then 
proceed to achieve a certain clarity without losing certainty. 12 
This is the goal of what is now called phenomenology. 

Edith Stein chooses the same path; for her, the awareness of one's own act 
of existing is the starting point par excellence for an ascent to the meaning 
of being. 

---

12 Wild, p. 130.
Directing his reflection upon his existence, man is confronted with the peculiarity of his own being. He recognizes it as a "now" between a "no longer" and a "not yet", as an actuality limited to a single moment, as a contingency inseparable from time. But this presently-actual being is not thinkable as an isolated event — as the point is not thinkable without a line and the moment not without a duration of time. A "before" and "after" are part of the existential awareness; they are not part of the fullness of present actuality, yet are not simply nothing. Man's act of existing is like the highest point of a wave: a point that presents itself as something coming out of darkness, passing for a moment through a ray of light and sinking back into darkness. The wave itself is part of the whole stream of man's existence that continually attains a highest point. At this momentary height of actuality, man's being resembles being-as-such that transcends all temporal change.\(^{13}\) It touches eternal being (eternal in the sense of temporal infinity\(^{14}\)) and achieves its own limited actuality only through a participation in an unchangeable actuality. This participation is "punctual", for it is possible only at the highest point of the wave and implies the contingency of man's being by reason of this punctuality. Yet the same punctual participation establishes a relationship between man's finite being and a stable being beyond temporal limitation, a relationship which grounds the possibility of the *analogia entis*. In a single point, a limited reality touches an unlimited one; human existence as a limited being shares in timeless actuality and from there derives its own height of life.

\(^{13}\) Stein, pp. 57-58.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 47, n.33.
This punctuality constitutes the "now" of human existence, a "suspension between not-being and being."\textsuperscript{15} The fully-actual present is the foundation of time, which thus can be understood only from the perspective of the "now," of that point which gives reality to a transience.

Past and future cannot participate in this actuality of the present moment, yet the present is not possible without these dimensions of time which as possibilities seem to cause a certain breadth of existence. Man holds the past and future aspects of his being in the form of memory and expectation within his reach and thus obtains the image of an enduring being which fills the dimensions of past and future.\textsuperscript{16} But this breadth is a deceiving one, while in reality man's being stands on the edge of a knife. Stein relies on the analyses of Conrad-Martius in order to emphasize the contrast between the phenomenal breadth and the factual punctual actuality of man's existence.\textsuperscript{17}

Past and future seem to constitute dimensions from which enduring being could arise and into which it could sink back, but in reality they do not contain and guard enduring being, they do not offer what they seem to promise.\textsuperscript{18} The "ontic birth place of time" lies in the "fully-actual present," in the fact that "actual existence ... is a mere touch with being ... in a point", presenting something given at the same time as something received.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16}Stein, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., pp. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 39.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
What appears as enduring being is only the continual passing of the place where the communication between a finite act of existing and existence without qualification is accomplished. This passage is the existential movement that constitutes time as its "space," that constitutes the "present" in its punctual actuality. The existential movement posits the past and the future as "empty dimensions" in and through the present, for it is a movement out of something into something, a movement which continually attains a height in the present moment but as movement is always in a state of transition. In this sense, being is forever a becoming and never attains a state of rest. It needs time. The position of the present which is to be renewed constantly in this existential movement presupposes a formal dimension in which a place can be found; it necessitates a future which can become present and a past which succeeds the present. The progression of time lies in this constant advancing of actuality. The center around which everything else gravitates is the passing present. The similarity of Stein's analyses to the Aristotelian notion of time is obvious. Also Aristotle recognized the importance of the present: time is both made continuous by the 'now' and divided at it. If time is considered as a continuous reality, as a deceiving breadth by reason of the dimensions of past and future, then it nevertheless is clear that "the 'now' is the link of time" in its

---

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., pp. 39-40.

capacity of connecting the past and the future.23

Since the present alone is able to reveal being, Stein's philosophizing is centered around the present. In a striking parallelism of the philosophical investigation into the relationship between being and temporality, Martin Heidegger considers this very present as the mark of greatest unauthenticity, indicating the "fall" away from the Self, the forlornness of the individual in an impersonal collectivity, the concern with world and others.24 For Heidegger, the future constitutes that aspect of time which alone gives authenticity to Dasein by providing those existential possibilities that contribute to Dasein's capacity to reveal being. This future implies a projection into possibility, a Dasein which is already-ahead-of-itself and thus can exist in its "total capacity-to-be."25 Yet in spite of the different emphases on Heidegger's future and Stein's present, both seem to imply a "going-ahead": Heidegger tries to capture the fullness of human existence by the projected project which is better able to reveal being if it is as totality held out into nothingness. Stein cannot deny the fact of contingency which also the future does not eliminate; yet she achieves man's punctual communality with being only through a continual "pushing-ahead," through the constant advance of actuality which constitutes a new present.26 For her, human existence can never be projected as a totality,
but only within the existential movement as a temporally limited capacity-to-be.

In his punctual existence, man finds himself "already-in-the-world," thrown into his particular spatio-temporal situation. Since both an attitude of questioning and a comprehension of being are proper to him, his nature implies a desire to know the reasons for his existential situation (his being-in-the-world or being-there, a state in which one finds oneself without having made a choice, an unauthentic "there" which still must be made an authentic "here"). Heidegger, blinding himself to the facts of contingency, finds that any inquiry for the "whence" and "whereto" is unnecessary, since man cannot penetrate behind the matter-of-factness of his being-there. Thus an inquiry into causality would not clarify man's existential situation. Edith Stein, however, having recognized the narrowness and limitation of human existence in its mere punctual actuality, sees the need for investigations transcending a contingent punctuality in order to achieve a first dimension of duration on her way to the attainment of being in its fullness.

The primary step toward such a duration is the act of awareness itself, which builds up beyond the present moment to a "unit of experiences." Although a punctual actuality was found in one's own being, yet an experience-unit forms a whole which in some way is actual as a whole. The meaning of such an enduring unit plays an important role in the ascent from finite to Infinite Being. At this stage of the inquiry, it gives a broader scope to the constantly passing actuality of being by holding together apparently unrelated moments of being or points of touching existence. Since a whole unit of experience is encompassed from the present moment, it gives a new
duration to man’s punctual being.

Stein concludes to this duration by an analysis of that mental activity which is present-actual right now: "my thinking, the reflection on the question of being."27 This activity has already endured for some time and will continue to endure until a different mental activity will be engaged in, or until a sudden sense-impression from the external world will bring this specific thinking activity to an end. Throughout the duration, this mental activity constitutes a whole, a unit which grows out of man’s life and "fills" a duration of time.28

An analysis of the stream of consciousness is necessary for the recognition of the significance of experience-units. Such an analysis might at first seem to be a psychological procedure which has no legitimate place in an ontology. Yet Edith Stein distinguishes her own approach from a strictly psychological one. According to her, psychology is exclusively concerned with psychic events man finds in his mental world, whereas phenomenology engages in a reflective meditation and thereby recognizes the natural world in its correlation to human consciousness.29 A psychological analysis is confined to static facts within the closed world of immanence, whereas a phenomenological analysis considers such "facts" as referring beyond themselves, as implying the vital relationship to the world of existing things

27 Ibid., p. 42.

28 Ibid. cf. note 28.

29 Stein, "Beiträge," p. 5.
and the world of essences. Since Stein accepts the basic phenomenological thesis of the "intentional object-intending nature of our experience," she is able to show how a descriptive analysis of the life of consciousness can be used for metaphysical and ontological purposes without violating the reality of the material world.\textsuperscript{30} The advantage of her own phenomenological approach is a manifestation that one can start a quest for being from one's own existential awareness without being confined to one's own punctual being; that a breadth can be achieved by proceeding from the chosen starting point; that the rich variety of beings (existents independent of human existence as well as essential beings) can be attained in a genuine phenomenological analysis: that it lies in the true nature of immanence to relate to transcendence, that the self known with immediacy and existential certainty is able to reveal this transcendence.

The original stream of consciousness is a movement of pure becoming in which the different phases of experiencing flow into one another. Within this stream, units are formed by the fact that a variety of contents successively occupies the life of the Ego: a joy, a fear, an act of thinking, an act of perceiving ... A unit is constituted as soon as no new phases within the same frame of reference are added to the preceding phase. The stream of experience is continuous as a whole, for new phases are added and lived phases are rescued from an engulfing past by being constituted as possibility for memory. Particular experiences may be added either in a temporal sequence, or they may occur simultaneously and thus provide a multiple

\textsuperscript{30}Collins, p. 141.
fulfillment of one single moment. 31 On the other side, the continuity of
the one stream is safeguarded since it proceeds from one Ego. 32

The units within this stream are fully-living and thus actual for a
limited duration of time. A whole unit is conceived as present, past, or
future. Yet how can a whole unit be considered as "present" and thus trans-
cend the punctual actuality of the present moment, since all fullness of
being lies only in the punctual present? 33 The reality of such units that
are built up in the movement of man's living being and have need of time for
their full constitution cannot be denied. They are englobed from the pre-
sent and thus are enabled to participate to a certain degree in actuality
by the fact that one aspect of a unit reaches the height of being. 34

The activities of thinking, of writing, of being joyful, of being sad,
of loving ... could all be taken as examples of experience-units that are
constituted in the continuous stream within a definite duration. As unit,
each one of these activities is at a certain time actual in regard to other
similar activities that then belonged already to the past or still to the
future. It is not, however, actual in its totality, since in a strict sense
only the activity of the "now" attains the fullness of reality and life.
But the "now" is an indivisible moment and immediately sinks back into the

32 Ibid., p. 11; cf. chap. III.
33 Stein, p. 43.
34 Ibid., p. 45.
past. The life of the Ego appears as a continuous living-out-of-the-past-into-the-future; potential aspects become actual, and actual aspects sink back into potentiality; that which is not yet fully-living reaches the height of life, and full life becomes "lived life"; the future becomes present and the present becomes past. How then can a durational unit reach beyond the moment, how can it — as something-which-is — extend from the past through the present moment into the future and thus provide the content for a duration of time? No being is possible in the empty dimensions of the past and of the future, yet a complete durational unit may be conceived as present even if it is not fully-living in its total extension, but in a living process of becoming participates in successive actuality.

When a partial aspect of a unit reaches the height of being, the total unit participates in this present actuality. Thus the mode of being of the whole unit derives from the character of punctual actuality which belongs to something: to my fear of a bad news, to my reflection on the question of being. This something which looses its character of present-actuality by becoming "past", constitutes the content for a particular experience and is essential for its unity and its actuality as totality. Both the object of an experience and the experiencing Ego condition the content of a unit to a certain extent; they are necessary for an experience and yet transcend it.

---

35 Ibid., p. 43.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 45; cf. chap. IV, p. 45.
38 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
The pure content "fear" or "joy", however, derives from a sphere independent of man's own being; it gives intelligibility to an experience and extends the punctual actuality to a breadth that permits to advance in the quest for the meaning of being.

The investigation has shown that man's being is a continuous motion and stands in extreme opposition to a changeless actuality. The thinkers of ancient Greece tried to solve this dilemma by confining real being either to a continual flux and thus to becoming (Heraclitus), or to the eternal-changeless being (Parmenides). But the encompassing communality between becoming and being, the analogia entis, is evidenced by the fact that becoming cannot be separated from being, because it is the transition to being and as such is determined through being.\(^{39}\) The continuous becoming and passing away which man experiences in himself, points beyond itself. It strives toward being, yet touches it only from moment to moment. But it is in this present-actual communality with an unchanging height of actuality beyond temporal limitations that man's existence already reveals the "idea of true Being", the eternally changeless, the pure Act.\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*, p. 44.

\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*
CHAPTER III

LIMITATION OF THE EGO

Already in the discussion of durational units, the experiencing Ego was introduced as a factor that is necessary for an experience and yet transcends it. An investigation of the eminence and limitation of this Ego will contribute to the progress in the ascent to the meaning of being. As basic for a variety of passing experiences, the Ego constitutes a further step in the attempt to go beyond the punctual actuality of contingent being.

Stein calls this Ego with Husserl the "pure I": that which possesses an immediate consciousness of an object or an action in the very act of experiencing. Husserl considers this I as "pure I and nothing else," which, as long as it is, remains the same. The I lives in every "I perceive, I conclude, I think, I desire," and is directed upon the object of perception, thought, or desire. As belonging to every experience, the Ego's life is the stream in which experience-units are continually constituted. "The I lives, and this life is its being." The stream of life is thus identical with the stream of being; the punctual actuality of the "now" is enlarged by reason of an underlying factor (the Ego) which is living and self-identical in

---

2 Stein, p. 46; cf. Husserl, Ideen ... II, pp. 97-104.
3 Ibid., p. 47.
every "now". Living out of the past into the future, the I continually brings forth new life and carries along past life. For it engages in new acts of experiencing and thus brings experience-units within its own life-stream. Since this stream is one of enduring being, experience-units participate in being by entering this stream. The self-identical Ego is thus being in an eminent way. It is related to its experiences as the holder to that which is held, the carrier to that which is carried, and hence is capable of making durational units participate in its own actuality. This manifests the greatness of the I as the "radiating-point of pure experiencing." Floating along in its own life-stream, the I is able to "open its spiritual vision" and to direct itself to something outside of this stream, which then enters the view of the Ego and by this directive activity becomes an object. This reminds of the Kantian a priori forms, the subjective element that colors and to some extent constitutes reality. But Stein does not hold an essential dependence of the known object on the knower; she bases her position on the Husserlian intentionality which does not constitute a reality as object, but makes an independent entity meaningful to the knower by bringing it into his own realm of experience. This is achieved by "opening the vision" of the Ego and taking an object into its view, which thus acquires significance for the experiencing person.

---

4 Stein, "Beiträge," p. 11.
5 Stein, p. 47.
7 Ibid., p. 54.
Stein's Ego does not have the static character of Husserl's "pure I", but possesses a vitality that is increased by additions from "outside." The I is not confined to its own little world of immanent activity, but is able to relate itself to the whole material and spiritual world. It becomes obvious at this point that the choice of the Self as starting point in the quest for being does not throw consciousness back upon itself, but that it leaves the way open for a genuine ontology and for intersubjective community. This possibility of extending the search for truth from the microcosm of individual consciousness into the macrocosm of things and persons is safeguarded by the spirit of objectivity that was described earlier as characteristic of the phenomenological method. The analysis of consciousness does not necessarily lead into an extreme subjectivism, although the tendency might be strong as exemplified by Husserl himself. For Edith Stein, such a tendency lost all its attraction, since her main purpose of philosophizing was the quest for being, a quest which legitimately may start from man's own existence, but if genuine never remains confined to the limitations of this particular existence.

The greatness of the Ego consists in the fact that "its being is presently-actual at every moment of this life." This discovery throws light on the actuality that experience-units attain in the successive moments of

---


9 cf. chap. I, p. 4.

10 Stein, p. 47.
their "touch" with existence, for the whole stream of experience is englobed by the life and thus the being of the Ego. The enduring actuality of the Ego's being provides the possibility for a temporal duration of experience-units. Thus the "past" does not simply fall back into nothingness, and the "future" is already in a certain way before reaching the height of life in the present. The grasp of the Ego holds that which is past and stretches out toward that which is coming; it is encompassing in the true sense of the word and grounds the possibility of a "retentional" and a "protentional" mode of existing. The Ego has the capacity to live a past experience over again, to step back into the past. But since being is ultimately bound up with the present, the Ego is only in the present moment. Yet it holds a passed reality still within its spiritual grasp and has the freedom to repeat what potentially is within this grasp.

The vitality of the Ego does not embrace everything that belongs to it to the same degree. It experiences differences in intensity as well as a temporality-bound vitality. The Ego's life extends through a successive duration, but only "as long as it is." Thus the enduring Ego or Self is seen in a different perspective: what previously might have resembled a psychological horizon recedes in favor of an ontological one. With the

11 Ibid., p. 48.
12 Ibid., note 35, referring to Husserl, "Vorlesungen zur Philosophie des innern Zeitbewusstseins."
13 Ibid., p. 49.
14 Ibid., p. 50.
Ego, the search for the meaning of being has reached a critical point. At a first glance, this Self seems to contain the fullness of being: it is always actual, even if past and future are only potentially in it. Should this be the ultimate step in the quest for being? Should the Self contain the plenitude of being and thus the power to make experiences participate in its own being?

At this point, a reflection upon the Ego in its relation to the past redirects the search for the meaning of being and manifests the Ego's insufficiency. The Self can go back in thoughts and memories, yet its freedom in this reflection is not unlimited. There are interruptions in the stream that the Self is unable to bridge, there are empty spans of time in which it neither finds anything to be "represented" nor itself. Such an emptiness might be a lack of memory, but also a dreamless sleep, a state of unconsciousness: was the Ego's being interrupted at that time? Furthermore, the stream of experience is neither clearly recognized as limited nor as unlimited. In its reflection on the past, the Ego comes to a horizon of obscurity. It does not penetrate to a clear beginning. The question for such a beginning and also for a possible end is not answered by immediate experience. The Self has become aware of emptiness at various points of its own being, and the existential question arises whether it comes out of nothing, whether it goes into nothing, whether the abyss of nothingness can open at any moment.17

16 Stein, pp. 50-51.
17 Ibid., p. 51.
The transitoriness of man's being becomes obvious. It is eminent being in comparison to the experience-units, and yet it reveals its own finiteness. The Ego's life has need of contents without which it is empty. For these contents, it depends on something outside itself: thus a noise comes from "outside"; a joy arising within man comes from "inside", out of a depth that opens itself to joy in a conscious act of experiencing without becoming completely transparent. Through its contents, the conscious life of the Ego thus depends on a double "beyond": on an outer and an inner world that are manifested in the Ego's realm of immanence.18 In Husserlian terms, the "immanence" of the Self manifests a "transcendence" and depends on it for its very life. The human being is conditioned from above and from below. His "life rises from a dark ground, it ascends like the flame of a candle that shines, but is nourished by the material that is not itself shining."19 The human spirit is not completely transparent to itself, and is not completely able to penetrate other things. Its limitation is manifested by this darkness: "... the past is full of gaps, the future can be foreseen only in certain details and with some probability, far more is indefinite and uncertain ... Origin and goal are completely inaccessible, as long as we confine ourselves to the consciousness that belongs to life itself and are not assisted by the experience of others, by judging and concluding thought and by truths of faith ..."20 If one wants to understand the truth about man's

18 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
19 Writings of Edith Stein, Selected, translated, and introduced by Hilda Graef (London: Peter Owen, 1956), p. 100.
20 Ibid.
being, its sublimity together with its limitation, then it is necessary to conclude from all the previous analyses that man cannot have his being from himself, but that it is a received being, at one point "put into being" or "thrown into the world" and kept in it from moment to moment. 21

This view of Edith Stein rejoins Heidegger's thrownness or facticity; man finds himself in a situation without knowing how he got there. But the question about the origin does not disappear — man may try to silence it, to condemn it. Heidegger may consider it as irrelevant for the quest for being, yet it rises again and again because of the fundamental constitution of the human being. This human being naturally asks for "Being which grounds the groundless and is grounded in itself," for someone who "throws the thrown." To Stein, the "thrown" reveals itself as creature; "creatureliness" is thus the mark of finite being and indicates the relationship between the contingent existent and God. 22

The admission of "thrownness" is followed by the recognition that received being can only come from something that is in possession of being, from someone who is master over it. A reception of being independent of eternal Being is unthinkable, because no temporal existent is truly in the possession of being. The true relationship between the Self and Being on which it depends can be explored only if the investigation will extend beyond the realm of immanence. 23

---

21 Stein, p. 52.
22 Ibid., note 40.
23 Ibid., p. 55.
Man's being is a fleeting one impregnated by nothingness. He faces the abyss of the nought at every moment, and from moment to moment must be presented with being as a gratuitous gift. Yet this utterly limited transient human existence is being and thus reaches the fullness of being. This height is achieved in a moment of transition from future to past, from a possibility to become present to a possibility to become re-present. The Ego lives this fullness of being in successive moments, not however as changeless, but with ever changing contents of its life.24

From the peculiarity of its own temporally limited being, the Ego can attain the idea of eternal being: in a natural tendency it draws back from nothingness and longs not only for the timeless continuation of its being, but also for the full possession of being: a being that could embrace its total content in a changeless present. Thus it attains the "idea of fullness" by piercing through that which it recognizes as its own limits.25 The Cartesian approach to God becomes evident here, for also Descartes reached the idea of the infinite through the idea of his own limited finite being.26

Furthermore, the Ego experiences degrees of closeness to or remoteness from the height of being. Its present is not always of equal extent and encompassing capacity (Spannweite), and also is subject to a gradation of vitality. Thus there are differences of degree in the horizontal inclusiveness and extension as well as the vertical intensity of the conscious life.

24Ibid.
25Ibid., p. 54.
26Meditation III, p. 166.
of the Ego. In going beyond all the degrees of extension and intensity attainable to itself, the Ego, transcending itself, can penetrate to the extreme limit of the possible and thus to the idea of an all-encompassing Being marked by the ultimate height of intensity — *sine Idee eines allumspannenden und höchstgespannten Seins*.

The Anselmian proof for the existence of God shines through this approach to infinite Being: there truly exists a being than which a greater cannot be thought, a being greater even than can be thought.

Confronted with this intensity of actuality, man becomes aware of pure and eternal Being as the measure of his own limited being. The amplification of his own perfections to the highest possible degree again calls to mind a thought from the *Proslogion*: God alone has "existence most truly and supremely" and all other beings have it in a lesser way. Every existent participates to a limited degree in a maximum perfection and thus also a maximum intensity of being. (*S.T.* I, 2, 30, Fourth Way). The whole notion of the *analogia entis* admits of a certain degree of participation (the communality of being in different kinds of existents), which plays a major role in Edith Stein's quest for being. Yet the principle of causality joins that of participation in her description of man's way to God. Similarly, Thomas Aquinas in his Fourth Way relates the gradation of perfection in things to a "maximum in any genus" which is the "cause of all in that

27 Stein, p. 54.


genus." (S.T.I,2,3c). Man discovers the idea of Pure Act or Infinite Being to be not only the measure of his own being, but the source and origin of finite being. Only divine Being, however, is actus purus. Any other existent is marked by a mixture of being and not-being, which as essential limitation of the structure of any imperfect being shows forth its consequences in everything man does and is.

The transitoriness of his own being becomes evident to man when he tries to penetrate to its ultimate ground. Stein is aware of the engulfing nothingness, of the darkness which both precedes and succeeds the fullness of existence in the punctual actuality of finite being. She is aware, too, of the dread which accompanies man -- unredeemed man -- in various disguises throughout his life: now as fear before this or that, but ultimately as anxiety before his own not-being, which "brings man before nothingness." Recognizing this human situation, Heidegger presents the very structure of Dasein as "being-untodeath", experiencing in death and the sentiment of dread its most authentic capacity-to-be. Man cannot go beyond this ultimate existential possibility, but is forced to "face himself" unto death in the confinement of his own limitations. For Heidegger, a genuine anxiety marks the arrival at authenticity; for Edith Stein, however, anxiety is not the dominating sentiment of life. But she is also aware of

---

30 Stein, p. 41.
31 Ibid., p. 55.
32 Ibid.
the superficiality of a false security resulting from man's finite mode of being, comparable to the Heideggerian immersion in an impersonal collectivity. The superficial view is a deceiving one; in a "static" time it presents a "permanent and enduring" being and conceals the outlook on the nothingness of the Self through the preoccupation with daily activities.34 But she already presupposes a reflective view upon the truth of man's being in its totality, and is ultimately concerned with his authentic mode of existence. This mode reveals that there is little reason for a self-assured security of the fleeting human existence. Yet Stein also asks whether that is sufficient to reject any security of being (Seinssicherheit) as objectively unfounded and hence "unreasonable", and whether the only reasonable attitude is a "passionate ... self-assured freedom unto death."35 For the undeniable transitoriness of man's being does not exclude another undeniable fact: he is and knows himself kept in being. In this he has peace and security, not the "self-assured security of a man who stands on firm ground by his own strength, but the sweet and blissful security of the child carried by a strong arm, a security which objectively considered is not less reasonable. Or would the child be "reasonable" who lived in constant fear that his mother might drop him?36

At first glance, it seems that neither Heidegger nor Stein kept an unwavering "reasonable" attitude throughout their analyses of finite human existence.

34 Stein, p. 56.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 57.
existence. Heidegger's passionate freedom to death breaks through the limes of reasonable courage and spirit of adventure. His glorification of Dasein is opposed to its very nature and existential experiences and in that respect "unreasonable." But Edith Stein's conclusions are not confined to strict reason either, for the confidence required in order to identify the fullness of Being with God is not possible without passing into the realm of faith. This is an indication that philosophizing, if it be at all true and genuine, cannot be divorced from a whole attitude toward life. Man's whole being is involved in the search for truth. Personal convictions provide those basic assumptions, supplementing the strictly philosophical ones, that influence and to a certain degree determine not only the procedure but also the result of all philosophizing. It is hard for a man to admit his limitations, but a humility before facts is more sublime than an extreme firmness in one's own preferred position: the one enabling man to transcend himself, the other forcing him to endlessly "stare at himself" in his dreadful finiteness.

Although faith is required to identify the personal God with the Ground for man's groundless being and the Condition for his conditioned being, yet natural reason can penetrate to a Cause that must have being by and through itself beyond the limitation of time, that alone is able to reveal the ultimate meaning of being. In his confrontation with nothingness, man recognizes his own being as received. It is in this sense that nothing and being belong together, not because "being itself is in its essence finite and reveals itself in the transcendence of Dasein held out into nothingness," 37

but because the finite human existence reveals Being as the infinite Cause of its own finiteness. The Ground of man's being can ultimately only be Being per se, Being that necessarily is. \(^{38}\) The existential awareness of one's own contingency leads to the recognition of the necessary divine Being as First Causal Principle of all contingency.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 57; cf. S.T. I, 2, 3c.
CHAPTER IV

LIMITATION OF ESSENTIAL BEING

Finite being has been recognized as temporal being, as limited to a mere "touch" with Being in the indivisible moment of the "now" by reason of its spatio-temporal situation. Although the punctual existence has been given a certain breadth by the stream of experience extending beyond the strict "now", and although the durational experience-units have been given being by the Ego that as self-identical subject of experiencing lived through the various phases of time, yet the limitation of the apparently more eminent being of the experience-units and the Ego in regard to that which they encompassed has been recognized. The whole of man's being is a fleeting one, unable to give meaning to its own transitoriness and to reach permanence exclusively in and through itself.

The question now arises whether all finite being is temporally limited, whether temporality and finiteness are identical. The answer to this question is an important one in Stein's quest for the meaning of being: in discovering finite beings beyond the realm of space and time, she searches into something that is able to give meaning to that which is realized in the contingency of temporal existence, in the temporal transition from potentiality to actuality. If a temporal existent were maintained in being for an unending duration of time, it would not for that reason be infinite. For the truly infinite is only that which cannot end because it is in possession
of being and master over it, and hence is eternal. Thus finiteness means more than temporality, and eternity more than the impossibility of ending in time. A characteristic mark of finite being is to be something; not nothing and not everything, but a single limited aspect in the multiple variety of things. This factual limitation seems to be possible in a realm beyond temporality, where essences are discovered as non-temporal yet limited.

Thus this phase in the search for the meaning of being will center not around the being of a thing, but around its what, not around the contingent punctual act of existing, but around that which receives this act of existing yet has its own specific mode of being in its own realm.

Already the discussion of experience-units has revealed a content of the experience in distinction from its mode of being, which was important for the coherence of the durational unit, and which by giving unity gives meaning and intelligibility to such a phase in the experiential stream. In the example of "my experienced joy at a certain moment of my life and about a certain object," that joy which at a certain time enters man's experiential world must be distinguished from "joy" which for man comes and goes. The content "joy" is other than the activity of "being joyful." It comes from a world independent of man's own consciousness, from an "outer" world that constitutes a sphere different from that of man's own existential being and

---

1 Stein, p. 60.
2 Reference to such a realm in chap. II, p. 29, and chap. III, p. 36.
3 Cf. chap. II, p. 29, note 37.
4 Stein, p. 61; cf. p. 51.
his experiential activities, a sphere where the content of an experience originates. One is confronted here with the problem of Plato's subsisting Forms that Aristotle vigorously objected to and yet adopted with the different signification of *eidos* or "form." Edith Stein applied the term "essentiality" (*Wesenheit*) to this reality which has no being in space and time, but which is realized or concretized in the various instances of actual existence. It is a timeless form that has become actual in time, a ground beyond time without which nothing temporal is possible, the "last condition for the possibility of objects."  

It is difficult to assign a place to these essentialities in an ontological hierarchy. They do not have the status of the Platonic Ideas nor are they God, but they assume an intermediate position between the world of temporal contingency and the perfect divine Being, as mediators between eternity and temporality, between unity and multiplicity, between necessity and contingency. The nature and place of these essentialities seems somewhat vaguer at first glance, but they are important for the full understanding of being because they alone make a contingent and chaotic world intelligible. Edith Stein is able to ultimately locate these timeless essentialities in the divine Mind. However, for the progression of this investigation and an understanding of the widening notion of being, they will be considered
in their own proper mode of being. Stein places her own treatment of essential being into a realm between "moderate realism" and "Platonic realism" (according to the traditional interpretation of Platonism), thus approaching most closely the conception of Duns Scotus. 8

Duns Scotus followed the tradition of Avicenna in considering the realm of essences as relation between infinite Being and finite beings. The philosophical problem and its solution seems to be the same for Avicenna, Duns Scotus, and Edith Stein. Hence Stein's solution will gain in clarity and philosophical significance by a brief exposition of the Avicennian and Scotistic position.

By attributing an esse essentiae to the essential elements that are concretized in existing things, Avicenna placed essences into a realm different from that of existing things (esse naturale) and that of the knowledge of these things (esse rationis). Essences thus have an absolute priority in regard to the added states of singularity and universality.9 Their being is that of an ideate of the divine ideas: an idea existing as the correlative of the divine idea. The esse essentiae thus belongs in a sphere which, considered temporally, occurs after God's self-knowledge and before God's will giving them actual existence.10 This Avicennian view presents difficulties for the knowledge of a free and all-powerful God by considering

8 Stein, p. 98.
10 Ibid., p. 239.
esses as "dangling between God's self-knowledge and the world of things." Such a difficulty, however, seems to be greater for theology than for philosophy. In a quest for being that takes its starting point from the world of actual existence, the meaning-giving essences must be confronted with equal intellectual rigor and honesty, without philosophical presuppositions of where they will be ultimately located.

Duns Scotus solved the problem of the being of essences in his "possibles" that are necessary for all contingency. Also for Scotus, they occupy a midway realm between the impossible and the necessary, the world and God. If essences as ideates of divine ideas had their own existence, creation would no longer be ab nihilo. But in God, the idea possesses a minimum of formal entity without which it would be nothing. Thus in order to escape nothingness, an essence must have a certain mode of being. For Scotus, this mode is "possibility", a self-identical state independent of actual existence that remains indifferent to all further determinations.

These views clarify Stein's contention that the essentialities contain in themselves the conditions of their own possibility and are prior in relation to their existing concretization. She refers to her fellow-phenomenologist Jean Hering, who in distinction from Duns Scotus represents the

11 Ibid., p. 240.
13 Ibid., pp. 290-91.
14 Ibid., p. 325.
"philosopher's" view of essences. For he does not consider any First Being to which essentialities would be related in an "upward" manner as they are related to empirical objects in a "downward" manner. For him, the sphere of essentialities is not one of midway or "between", but simply one beyond that of concrete existents without specification of the nature of this beyond.

Hering distinguishes the essence of an object, in the common signification of the constitutive moments of its whatness, from an essentiality that is free from any relation to objects. Since the mode of being of such essentialities does not depend upon a receiving element, he can consider them as "subsisting and resting in themselves." In this sublime mode of being, essentialities yet do enter the empirical world; they become embodied in the essential form of objects that thus can participate in the timeless forms. Yet for Hering, an essentiality does not participate in anything outside of itself; it prescribes its own essence and contains the conditions of its possibility completely in itself. By limiting his quest to the indefinite "beyond", Hering's essentialities seem to exhaust the meaning of being, since any further participation is cut off. Thus they approach most closely Plato's Ideas, although Hering specifies the use of his own "participation" as a mere linguistic approximation of the interrelationship between objects and timeless forms, which relationship seems to resist an

15 Jean Hering, "Bemerkungen über das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee," Jahrbuch für Philosophie ... hers. E. Husserl (Halle, 1921), IV, 510.
16 Ibid., pp. 510-11.
exact expression.

Essentialities can now be recognized in their relation to human experience: "The life of the Ego would be chaos impossible to disentangle, if nothing could be distinguished in it, if the essentialities were not realized." Through them, life becomes ordered and harmonized; it attains a planned unity and intelligibility. Essentialities thus constitute the meaning or *logos*, the ultimate condition of everything that can be said or understood. The very possibility of communication is grounded in the fact that words have a meaning. In this context, the being of essences could be related to Bertrand Russell's "relation": since it is the relation of a word to an individual thing which "makes the one mean the other", the relation between these two is meaning. An analysis of language alone is not sufficient to discover this meaning, but it is a means to penetrate to the intelligible foundation of things. Philosophical endeavor can disclose this fundamental meaning by piercing to the root of intelligibility and thus making understanding possible, for meaning can be understood, and understanding is to grasp a meaning. The proper function of spirit or intellect is to understand the intelligible, guided in its search into the interrelationship of meanings by the very intelligibility it tries to discover. The mind is restless until it penetrates to the *logos* of a thing, until it discovers the reasons and conditions for its being what it is. Already Plato sug-

17 Stein, p. 64; cf. Graef, p. 152.


19 Stein, p. 64.
gests such a penetration to the idea of the individual thing in which alone
man's mind can rest. Thus the very power of reasoning necessitates some­
thing stable and unchanging beyond the sphere of contingent things.20

These ultimate reasons constituting the meaningfulness of an object
or an experience are the essentialities. Hering calls them the only reali­
ties that by and through themselves have the capacity of making things in­
telligible; their knowledge alone enables man to understand.21 Philosophi­
cal knowledge is characterized by this attempt to discover the ultimate causes
of a thing; it requires a penetration to that aspect which gives a thing
its very intelligibility and thus makes the grasping of its meaning possi­
ble.

Dialectical training is necessary for coming to know this meaning of
things, otherwise, as Plato already advised, the "truth will elude your
grasp."22 Thus it is not surprising that phenomenologists have put such a
great emphasis on a method of grasping the basic constitution of things.
A philosopher, one who seeks to explain reality in terms of its ultimate in­
telligibility, has the obligation to engage in an adequate way of inquiry
in order to achieve an intellectual vision of the essence of a thing (We­
genschau). Such an "intuition" must be clearly understood in a phenomenolo­
gical context.23 One does not wait for a mystical illumination, but achieves


21 Hering, p. 522.

22 Plato, "Parmenides", 135c, p. 97.

23 Stein, "Husserl's Phänomenologie ...", p. 329.
any insight through laborious intellectual work, which supposes a "piercing and painstaking analysis of the given material, a careful and exacting intellectual synthesis of various aspects of the object." Stein characterizes the phenomenological method as a sharp penetration into the interior aspects of a thing which will permit the analyst to "read within" the thing (intus legere), and thus to "intuit" its essential nature. Such an intuition is adequate if an essence is revealed in its completeness. But more often it is imperfect or inadequate, not only with regard to an intensive but also to an extensive completeness of the essence under consideration. For it lies in the nature of certain categories of essences that their givenness is always "onesided." In a sequential analysis, this results in a "manysided" knowledge, which however can never become "all-sided", which never can be an intuitive grasp of a full and complete presence. The actual moment of insight as the most proper achievement of the intellect is constituted by passive reception. But activity implying concentration on the part of the knower and minute analysis of the object of knowledge is a necessary preparation for the possibility of insight.

The phenomenological method thus consists in pointing to what is given and elucidating it, in fixing the gaze directly on the object and trying to

25 Stein, "Husserl's Phänomenologie ...", p. 332.
26 Husserl, Ideen I, pp. 13-14.
27 Stein, Husserl's Phänomenologie ..., p. 332.
discover its pure eidos. The rigor of this method makes the required apodicticity and the revelation of truth possible, for all evidence is derived from the thing itself. Edith Stein engaged in such a method in order to avoid even a momentary neglect of the path to be followed in the search for the meaning of being.

Husserl seems to suggest a complete separation of the knowledge of facts and the knowledge of essences, two fields of inquiry without relation to each other, thus founding a pure empirical science and a pure eidetic science. The essence of pure eidetic science consists in the exclusive use of ideation without acknowledging empirical facts either in its origin or in the course of its progression. 28 Edith Stein indicates in her own approach to the phenomenological method the necessity to start from sense experience in order to achieve any eidetic vision. 29 Only by the consideration of finite being which man encounters in the world of natural experience, is he able to attain essence as the inner determination of things independent of exterior influences. With this approach to knowledge, any "realist" objection to the phenomenological intuition of essences becomes meaningless. Such an intuition is not divorced from concrete reality, and does not hold a visio beatifica in this life. Man does not intuit essences of things as determined by the divine Essence itself. But he discovers the essential constitution of a finite being which points beyond itself to an archetype

29 Stein, pp. 99-100.
which signifies measure and orientation for the thing. The being of these archetypes, pure forms or essentialities — the esse essentiae of Avicenna and the "possibles" of Duns Scotus — is veiled in mystery. Man does not comprehend the essentialities in the proper sense of the word, but only approaches them. Yet it is only by their help that he grasps whatever intelligibility things contain. Thus every thing contains in its essence a secret by which it refers beyond itself.\(^{30}\) This referential character makes the human knowledge of essences possible, but never exhaustive and complete. Bound to the knowledge of things in time, a human vision of essences is always fragmentary.\(^{31}\)

By affirming the necessary role of sense experience as a starting point, Stein preserved access to objectivity and left the way open to a genuine knowledge of reality. In regard to this starting point of knowledge, she was aware of a far-reaching similarity between the phenomenological and the scholastic method — in spite of the different realms in which the initial center of apodicticity is located: knowledge begins with the senses and is achieved through an intellectual elaboration of the sensory material. A basic difference, however, lies in the fact that for phenomenology, a comparison of individual things and a subsequent abstraction are not the means to reach the essence of a thing. A single object might be sufficient to "abstract," to disregard that which belongs to a thing accidentally.\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) Stein, pp. 227-29.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., pp. 100-01.

To understand this "abstraction" from a single individual, a more detailed analysis of essence or concretized essentiality is necessary. Basically, it is the peculiarity constituting an object, its thisness, that "by which the what of an object is determined." Husserl calls it the nexus of essential predicables that must constitute a thing so as to be able to accept further secondary accidental determinations. Thus essence is a connection of essential traits which achieve unity through a nucleus, an interrelated intelligible structure. One has to search for such a nucleus in the elucidation of given data. For the essential traits reveal the essentialities they participate in, and thus provide intelligibility. All other traits must be disregarded, since they have no significance in disclosing the meaning of a given object. Considered from a non-phenomenological point of view, a comparative analysis of various individual objects might seem able to facilitate this search for the nucleus of the essence by discovering a pattern. But for phenomenology, such a facilitating pattern contains the danger of insufficient intellectual rigor. Only the concentration on each particular object aims at the discovery of truth as the goal of the search.

This search for the nucleus reveals that the essence is something dis-

33 Stein, p. 69.
35 Stein, p. 33.
36 Hering, p. 502.
covered in an object and thus is basically different from a notion or concept that is formed. 37 A notion summarizes what is common to several essences as the realization of a timeless essentiality, and as such it is separated from and "intends" the object. Concepts can be formed only after an essence is grasped in an intuitive vision.

The distinct mode of being of the entities that give meaning and intelligibility to spatio-temporal existents is "essential being." This mode belongs both to essences as the temporal concretization of timeless forms and to essentialities or pure essences in their unconcretized state of being; for the essence of a particular existent is but a means by which the pure forms relate themselves to the world of space and time and provide intelligibility. What exactly distinguishes this "essential being" from the "existential being" of the temporal world, and how does it contribute to a more complete understanding of the meaning of being?

The essence "joy" is realized or actualized (verwirklicht) in a concrete instance of "my joy." 38 But joy is actualized only as long as my joy is actual. Previous and subsequent to this durationally limited actualization, it has no being in the experiential reality of the Ego. Yet the essence "joy" cannot be denied a mode of being in its state of independence -- it is something and thus is. 39 As preceding the object and contributing to its

37 Stein, p. 71.
38 cf. chap. IV, p. 45.
39 Stein, p. 80.
realization, it can be called "possible." But this possibility signifies more than the logical possibility of becoming actual in an object, and also more than the lower preparatory step to actual being, which is "potency" in Stein's sense of the word. The "possibility of essence" (Wesenmöglichkeit) refers to the possibility of actualization that is grounded in the essence as the constitution of everything actual and possible. But beyond this possibility as a means to the goal of actualization, essence implies its own being, its essential being. This mode of being is the only one for essentialities, whereas for essences in the limited sense of the term it is a pre-actual mode of being. For the world of essential being can be thought of as a hierarchy in which the essentialities as simple archetypes constitute the highest level, which in turn are imitated by the essential entities. In this second level, one discovers a hierarchization according to greater or lesser universality.

The mode of essential being, considered in separation from its concretization, does not imply any temporal transitions. It thus is differentiated from "real being" which allows gradation in relation to its nearness to or distance from perfect Being, and which is engaged in a continued ascent from possibility to actuality, thus intensifying its height of being. In the experiential world of the Self, "real" being signified "presently-actual." But in the whole existential world of contingency, reality also implies

---

40 Compare again with the "possibles" of Duns Scotus, chap. IV, p. 48.
41 Stein, pp. 81 and 257.
42 Ibid., pp. 81-32.
"efficacy." This efficacy (Wirkamkeit) is not strictly identical with reality (Wirklichkeit); it is grounded in an existent's highest measure of being. On this height, Stein considers being as bursting forth into efficacy — it is truly "efficient," goes out of itself, "reveals" itself. 45 Essential being does not possess this efficacy: the essentiality "joy" does not vivify, the essentiality "light" does not shine forth. But the mode of essential being seems to have its own eminent "height" or "perfection": whatever is essentially, is without change what it was. 44 The distinction between the phases of time, present, past, and future, is nullified. In complete independence of time, it is at every moment: the very being of essentiality is rest in itself. 45 This mode of being manifests the autonomy of essential in regard to real being. To human awareness, essences have grown out of the stream of time, but they seem to transcend that stream in timelessness. They constitute the laws that determine the stream of time and experience, but are not themselves part of this stream. As sources of intelligibility, they are finite in their factual limitation to be something at the exclusion of everything; but they are also beyond the possibility of beginning and ending in time. Do these entities contain the eminent being toward which the whole search was directed, or do they signify something which is neither temporal nor "eternal" in the full sense of the all-encompassing Being? 46

---

43 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
44 Ibid., p. 90.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p. 102.
Although essentialities are "resting in themselves," stable and timeless, they do not have their mode of being by and through themselves and are not capable of determining the moment of their own concretization. Lacking the efficacy that results from the highest intensity of being, essentialities cannot effect their "transition from essential to real being" and thus do not contain the full meaning of "actual being." Hence they are not creative, but seem to be weak and powerless forms in their sublime mode of being. Thus it is not the underlying meaning or intelligibility of an experience or an object which gives being to a contingent reality. It does not have an englobing actualizing capacity and thus cannot account for a breadth of existence. But together with his own being, man has been given meaning by the master of being who at the same time is master of meaning. The fullness of intelligibility is contained in eternal Being that takes the meaning for every creature out of itself. Essentialities are thus not self-subsisting besides eternal Being. But they are formed by eternal Being within itself as archetypes for the world to be created in and with time.

Eternal Wisdom answers the question of the philosopher: "In the beginning was the word ..." (Logos, meaning). The theological and the philosophical meaning of logos interpenetrate and contribute to their respective understanding, which is evident in the striking analogy between Logos in God and logos as the meaning of the content of things. Created things are not in God as parts in a whole, but the subsistence and interrelationship of all

---

47 Ibid., p. 93.
48 Ibid., pp. 102-05.
things in the Logos signifies the unity of everything that is, the unity of a meaningful whole. This relationship is that of a completed work of art in which each single trait fits into the harmony of the whole structure according to a pure law or pattern. Thus all meaning is encompassed by the divine Spirit, and everything existing has its exemplary-causal condition in the divine Being.

In the present phase of the inquiry, the quest for the meaning of being has investigated the nature and knowability of finite entities beyond space and time. These entities seemed to possess the plenitude and height of being: they seemed to be eminent both in extension and in intensity; they seemed to rest in themselves and thus to constitute the final goal of the search. But the sublimity was a dead one: a sublimity that included reality but excluded efficacy, a sublimity that ultimately was recognized as not self-subsisting, as capable of completion through its relation to the temporal world, as containing the possibility of entering "objective reality," but not capable of effecting this entrance by and through itself.

The path is open now to inquire into the meaning of being common to both the real and the essential realm. The search for being has transcended both the existential and the essential realm by recognizing the limitations of both realms, and has cleared the way to ponder over the fullness of being, which was touched at as the climatic point of both inquiries.

49 Ibid., pp. 108-09.
50 Ibid., pp. 110 and 112.
51 Ibid., p. 81.
CHAPTER V

THE FULLNESS OF BEING

The quest for the meaning of being is directed toward the fullness of being. Such a fullness cannot be attained directly but is determined by the human mode of knowing. Human knowledge proceeds by gradual progression to an ever-increasing clarity. A variety of partial truths, insufficient in their partiality, yet leads to the discernment of an ultimate truth that assigns the proper place to elements with limited truth-value. Thus existential and essential being are both limited aspects of the full meaning of being.\(^1\) In the preceding inquiries, these two different meanings of being have been discerned as containing limitations imposed by the world of space and time. In each case, the searching mind penetrated to a fullness of being: it constituted the Ground for man's transitory being that constantly faces the abyss of nothingness, as well as the Ground for meaning and intelligibility that timeless essentialities give to concrete experience-units and concrete existents.

In order to grasp the full meaning of being, the separation between the realms of existential and essential being must be transcended. Only such a transcendence will make the discovery of the communality of being possible, and only this communality will reveal being in its fullness. This fullness

\(^1\) cf. \textit{Stein}, p. 265: being is not identical with existence, but has a wider meaning since it includes the being of essentialities.
reaches beyond the confines of each particular sphere; it is all-encompassing and must achieve the height and breadth of being in a continuous present.

In search for this fullness of being, one encounters certain formal dimensions that are found in everything-which-is. Since these forms are attributable to every being without taking account of its distinctive content, they are termed "transcendentals."\(^2\) A transcendental thus has a more inclusive meaning than a particular being either in the existential or the essential order. Since the quest for the meaning of being is necessarily directed toward such a transcending notion, the formal dimension proper to everything-that-is might either fulfill the meaning of being or refer beyond itself to the authentic fullness of being.

These introductory remarks will help to clarify the place of the transcendentals in Edith Stein's quest for being. For these transcendentals seem to encompass the communality of being since they express something belonging to each entity. But at the same time, their formal character prevents them from representing the fullness of being. This explains the importance of a clear distinction between content and form in everything-which-is, between a specific thisness and its formal dimension without which a content can neither be nor be thought.\(^3\) Thus the content of a particular existent refers to its nexus of essential traits, to the ultimate essentialities that

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 263.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 261; cf. pp. 272-73 for this distinction between content, ontological form and conceptual form.
a concrete essence participates in, such as redness, color, and size. It is in the vision of these last elements that the knowing mind finds rest.

A form, however, is proper to each content. It also is intelligible and thus contains meaning, yet it does not provide rest for the searching mind, but refers beyond itself by its very emptiness: it demands a fulfillment that can be given only by a content. Form and content always belong together, for all being is fullness in a form. Although the formal dimension of a thing can be grasped in itself, yet it has the emptiness that characterizes "form" and the need for content.

The most general of these formal dimensions is the form "something," since it is inseparable from anything that is. Its encompassing capacity is so great that it seems to refer to limited beings in all their gradations of finiteness and even stretch out to the infinite. For "something" can be understood as "any-thing-that-is", thus suggesting its exclusive reference to finite being as "one besides another." But if understood as "not nothing," "something" seems to find its highest fulfillment in First Being. With this degree of extension, the formal dimensions of *aliquid* seems to enclose all being, and thus also the infinite gap of the *analogia entis*.

Stein realizes the importance of investigating the various other trans-

---

4 cf. chap. IV, p. 55.
5 Stein, p. 260.
7 *Ibid*.
cendental notions which reveal being from a certain point of view. Thus res and unum are added to aliquid as formal dimensions of one (the totality of being). Each one points to a different emphasis within being-as-such: res to the aspect of whatness and unum to the aspect of negation of division. As forms of fullness, all these transcendentals do not reveal a content, but each particular existent must provide the definite fulfillment for the empty dimension.

Thus these dimensions do not truly give the content of being but only grasp it formally. The full meaning of being cannot be found within the limits of a purely formal ontology. The boundaries of such a formal investigation seem to be transcended by relating being-as-such to another reality and thus giving a content to an empty form. The transcendental notions of the verum and bonum including the pulchrum provide the transition from a formal to a material ontology. For they relate being to the spiritual soul as knowing, and thus do not divorce any longer a positive content from the formal empty dimensions.

Truth as conformity necessitates a relation of being to something other than itself, and this relation helps to reveal an element of being that was not discovered by its purely formal dimensions, namely the openness of being to the knowing spirit. Transcendental or ontological truth always has its foundation in the existent: a true or authentic thing is in the possession of all that belongs to its essence. Everything—which—is is "in truth"

9 Ibid., p. 264.
10 Ibid., pp. 267 and 269.
that which it is. This "in truth" becomes meaningful only when measured according to something different from itself, thus necessitating a measuring intellect. By reason of what it is, a thing can be grasped and judged by the knowing spirit. The existent is the condition for the possibility of conformity or non-conformity with the knowing spirit -- the logical truth or falsity. And as foundation for logical truth, being itself is called transcendentally true.\(^\text{11}\) Although the existence of known object and knowing spirit is presupposed for logical truth as something third, the possibility for such a conformity is grounded in being-as-such.

In order to clarify the transcending character of this ontological truth as truly belonging to all being, Stein distinguishes it from "essential truth": the identity of a reality with the pure form it concretizes. A thing is "essentially" true if it is fully and completely what it ought to be, if it is perfectly conformed to and in harmony with the essentiality whence the individual essence derives its intelligibility.\(^\text{12}\) Although this truth is presupposed for ontological truth, it is not transcendental in the true sense since it refers only to the world of real things, to the sphere of temporally limited existents where things can imitate a timeless pure form and thus can be "true" in this imitation.\(^\text{13}\) Transcendental truth, however, is the mark of all being. Openness or revealedness belongs to all being: it can be penetrated by the knowing mind, even though it is not com-

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., p. 275.
\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., p. 276.
\(^\text{13}\) Ibid., p. 283.
pletely transparent as for the divine Mind.\textsuperscript{14} Spirit has the property to be open to all being, to make in a certain way its own the revealedness of beings. Aristotle expressed this insight by considering the soul as being in some way all things, the mind as being "potentially whatever is thinkable."\textsuperscript{15} In epistemology, this view was elaborated in order to oppose the "copy-theory" of knowledge. To the realist, knowledge is the intentional existence of the thing known, and this is true by reason of the revealedness proper to all being.

In contemporary thinking, Heidegger has given new life to this relationship between being and spirit, since his "comprehension of being" proper to human existence has a unique place in his quest for being. But limiting himself exclusively to human \textit{Dasein}, he cuts off the avenues that could lead to a true ontology, to truly transcendental relationships. Stein does not base her quest exclusively on comprehension as an excellence of human existence, but on being, which in all its particularized forms possesses the character of revealedness, and which by the openness to spirit refers beyond itself: \textit{esse} is "to be revealable to spirit."\textsuperscript{16} In the existential realm, this revealedness is obvious by the very fact that man can know things. But also in the sphere of essentialities, being is open to spirit: one exemplification of this openness is the very possibility of a knowledge of es-

---

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 276.

\textsuperscript{15}"On the Soul", \textit{The Basic Works of Aristotle}, Bk. III, Ch. 4, p. 591.

\textsuperscript{16}Stein, p. 277.
sences which presupposes an essence disclosing its secret. 17 Another application is found in "artistic" truth, where an idea is contemplated and then by reason of its openness to the spirit engaged in the vision, is concretized in the work of art. 18 Transcendental truth or revealedness belongs to the very nature of the idea envisioned by the artist; it makes an imitative and imaginative forming into space and time possible.

Only now has a meaning of being been discovered that finds an application beyond the separation of real and essential being. This communality has helped to bridge the gap between temporality-bound and temporality-transcending beings and thus leads toward the fullness of being. The different transcendental notions relate to particular aspects of this fullness. Being signifies revealedness, the capacity to be grasped by the knowing spirit: as such all being is true; it implies taking one's place in the totality of being and thus contributing to the perfection of this totality: as such all being is good; it means to be ordered according to a structural law and thus to be in harmony both with ordering spirit and with knowing spirit: as such being is beautiful and at the same time reasonable. Interpenetration and ordering of parts in a totality implies oneness: as such being is one. 19 The transcendental determinations reveal being in its totality. Yet as formal dimensions they have to be given content, and thus

17 cf. chap. IV, p. 52.
18 Stein, p. 231.
19 Ibid., p. 308.
the full meaning of being is more than the totality of transcendental determinations. For being which is not an empty dimension but is being in the fullness of its nature. As such it is one, and everything-that-is participates in it. Its full meaning corresponds to the plenitude of all existents. By speaking about being, man intends this fullness without, however, grasping it in the unity of a fulfilling vision. It is the infinite task of human knowledge to penetrate deeper and deeper into the fullness of being without ever exhausting it.20

The attempt to bring this unity of being into harmony with the multiplicity of existents involves the age-old problem of the One and the Many. The pure forms or essentialities provide the bridge between unity and multiplicity: they "participate" in the one being, and as meaning-giving units they are further imitated and in a certain sense participated in by their concretization in the space-time world. As multiple, they render the multiplicity of sense objects and experiences intelligible, yet receive being from the fullness of being which is one.21 Since these ideas do not occupy an independent sphere simply "beyond" contingent reality22, but are existing in the divine Mind, they refer the paradox of the simultaneous unity and multiplicity of being to perfect Being itself: only One is the master of all being, only One is in possession of it, only One can give being. Thus the unity of the totality of being is maintained by this single source and its all-encom-

20 Ibid., pp. 308-09.

21 cf. chap. IV, 46-48 for a discussion of essentialities as "between" God and concrete existents.

22 cf. Ibid., pp. 48-49, Hering's view.
passing realm of dominion.

All fullness of being is thus contained in the Infinite Divine Being, in the Ultimate One, Who alone is able to give being. Thus the concretization of an essentiality is neither achieved by a limited essential nor a limited existential being. The cause of being can neither be found in the realm of essence nor of concrete existence, but only in a Being that from all eternity is both essential and real. Anything finite ultimately leads to this Ground without beginning and end, the First Being, the Pure Act. 23

This First Being suffers no limitation. As Pure Act, it contains no transitions from possibility to actuality. Temporal and factual unlimitedness as well as unchangeable height and intensity of being point to that perfection of the Eternal and Infinite which is grasped only with great difficulty: essence and existence are no longer separable, whatness and being are identical. 24 In this identity, essence and existence have a meaning different from these principles as found in creatures, but also the relation between essence and existence has no longer the same meaning. Man cannot obtain a vision of a being grounded in itself; he can only conclude that everything finite must be pre-formed in God since both whatness and being originate from Him as their first Source. But the ultimate Cause of all being and whatness must be both in perfect unity. 25 There is no being outside of

---

23 Stein, pp. 510-11.
24 Ibid., p. 311.
25 Ibid., p. 313.
God in which He could take part: the pure forms or essentialities "enter" contingent reality and thus reach concrete existence at a certain point in time — God alone stands above this limitation of finiteness. When St. Thomas uses terms as "God is His Life," "God is His Being," then these are only attempts to express in the form of judgments something which by reason of its perfect simplicity cannot be taken apart and thus cannot properly be put into the form of a judgment. The statement "God is - God" or even "is is" would be the most acceptable one, as expression of the impossibility of a determination of His Essence through anything but Himself.  

In this simplicity, God is all His attributes; He is His knowledge. As Eternal, Infinite, Unbounded Being, He lives in an everlasting present and from this present encompasses the whole of time and eternity. Yet any predication made of God is analogical; thus all divine attributes are understood only as transmitted from creatures to the Creator. Taking "knowledge" as an example, Edith Stein recognizes the disparity between human and divine knowledge in the term "knowledge" itself, which in its German version Erkenntnis implies a beginning, a process of acquiring knowledge (Wissen). In God, there is no "coming to know"; His is a knowledge from eternity, encompassing and transcending temporality. This difference is evidenced in the relation of knowledge to created things: since it is from eternity, God's knowledge precedes created things and is completely independent of them. It alone is creative in the full sense, whereas human "making" is only

26 Ibid., pp. 316-17.
Concerning the role of divine ideas in the creative thinking, Edith Stein states that they are enclosed in divine thought together with their relation to created things. They are His own essence in the self-imposed "limitation" to be the exemplar of finite things in order to make a limited participation in the divine essence possible. This "limitation" consists in the fact that God knows His essence as variously imitable. In Thomistic thinking, this does not mean that there is a plurality within God, or that the imitable ideas could be located outside of God before entering the state of concrete existence. It is precisely at this point that Stein seems to follow Avicenna and Duns Scotus in assigning an "essential being" to these forms and thus fitting them for their role of mediation between the One and the many. But since her notion of "being" is not limited to existence but includes the "state of being" proper to essentialities, Stein can locate these ideas within Perfect Being without contradiction in her own thinking. The Thomistic view will help to clarify the real importance of these "mediating elements": God's self-knowledge is a single knowledge act, since in God, being and knowing are identical. This single act is the principle of plurality. There is no distinction between self-knowledge and the divine ideas, for "many ideas find in the one divine idea the very principle of

27 Ibid., pp. 284-85.
28 Smith, p. 243.
their plurality." 

The question whether God is free in the formation of ideas and in that sense their creator, or whether the ideas are formed according to an inner necessity and an unchangeable law which even God cannot touch, a question that originated the opposition between medieval voluntarism and intellectualism, is silenced by Stein in another question: whether a discussion on the possibility of a "before" and "after" and their influence upon each other is at all meaningful because of the perfect simplicity of the divine Being in which to know and to will coincide. The divine Will cannot be thought other than true which means completely independent of anything which is not itself, and at the same time perfectly illumined by the divine Wisdom, since both are one. 

Edith Stein makes a last attempt to grasp something of the perfect divine Being by taking the Name of God as starting point. God did not call Himself "I am Esse," but "I Am Who Am." One may hardly dare to analyze these words, but Stein concludes from the Augustinian interpretation that He Whose name is "I Am" is being in person. For he did not reveal Himself under a specific name that would have limited His being, but attributed the fullness of being to His "I." Perfect Being is thus not a mere Principle or an Energy, but a Person. Only a person can be the creative and activa-

30 Smith, p. 244; cf. S.T. I,15,2,ad 1 "ideas are said to be many inasmuch as many models are understood through the self-same essence"; ad 2 "For God by one principle understands many things."


ting cause of an intelligible world-order; only a knowing and willing being can determine ends and order means in view of that end. The I is a being aware of its own being and of its distinctness from any other being. From the I originates that act of existing which we call life. Every man is an Ego; at a certain point in his life he starts to call himself "I." The peculiar being of the Ego has been discussed earlier: in relation to the contents that "fill" its life, it possesses eminent being. For its life is presently-actual at every moment whereas the contents of its conscious life reach the height of the present only for one moment; it is the carrier of the experience-contents, giving life and englobing them to a unit. Yet this eminent being is a fleeting one and nothing by itself: it is empty if not filled with contents which it receives from spheres beyond itself. Its being is characterized as a ray of light in the midst of darkness, containing gaps and constantly confronting nothingness. Obviously an infinite abyss separates the Ego from Pure Being, yet it resembles the Divine more than anything else in the realm of human experience since it is a "person." By eliminating every aspect of limitation and nothingness one can come to grasp divine Being. In God, the non-identity between conscious life of the Ego and being does not exist: His "I Am" is the eternally-living present, without beginning or end, without gaps or darkness, present to Him in its infinitude. It has all fullness in and by itself, it is that whence every-

33 Stein, p. 317.
34 cf. chap. III, pp. 34-35.
35 Stein, pp. 313-18.
thing else receives being, the Unconditioned which conditions the totality of existents. It admits of no changing contents, no emerging and sinking back, no transition from possibility to actuality or from lower to higher reality. The complete fullness is eternally present, without temporal sequence of act, but from eternity perfectly one in the unity of the one divine act in which all the different significations of "act" coincide. The divine I is not empty, but contains and dominates in itself all fullness: "It is the fullness of being formed personally." 36 Encompassing everything-which-is, it is fullness of being in every sense of the word: it is "essential being" and as such the ground for all meaning and intelligibility; it is "real being" because the life of the Ego is highest actuality, and as such it is the ground for human existence. It spiritually englobes itself and is transparent to itself. As ground of meaning and of existence, Perfect Being makes ordered multiplicity possible in and through its unity. 37

In Stein's view, the fullness of the divine Being as origin of the unfolding of the meaning of being cannot be grasped by philosophical knowledge alone. Thus she considers it as beyond the possibility of natural reason to harmonize the multiplicity of essential beings with the perfect oneness of God. This seems to be the reason for the fact that the reader of her works does not find more clarity concerning the exact ontological status of these pure forms, for reason has reached its limit. Without any recourse to faith, Jean Hering had considered the realm of essentialities as an independent

36 Ibid., p. 319.
37 Ibid., p. 320.
sphere of self-subsisting entities. Already the attempt to bring the simplicity of the divine Being into harmony with the multiplicity of ideas is marked by a reason guided by faith, which under the guidance of the words of Revelation tries to grasp mysteries at which human concepts utterly fail.

The incapability of man to come to an adequate knowledge of God does not, however, free him from the responsibility to try to penetrate deeper into these mysteries. Edith Stein in the great tradition of Augustinian thinking shows through her philosophy and through her life that man can do so only under the guidance of faith. It is faith that makes man bold enough to penetrate deeper into a realm in which all purely natural knowledge would be insufficient. It is faith that enables him to make the leap and bridge the abyss from the finite to the infinite, from time to eternity.

But reason can go a long way in preparing for faith: by laborious analyses and penetrating insights into the nature and life of the Ego and by investigations into the realms of real and essential being, it can transcend the finiteness of these realms and thus "touch" the infinite and eternal fullness of Divine Being, the "fulfilling vision" of which, however, is not possible to reason alone.

---

38 cf. chap. IV, 59.

Edith Stein's quest for the meaning of being has shown that this quest can find an answer precisely because all being has a common meaning. The empty dimension of being-as-such finds its proper fulfillment according to the particular meaning given to the "is." Thus the fulfillment might be a meaning-structure or essentiality — in this case "being" has the meaning of "essential being." Or the fulfillment might be an existent in the world of time and space — "being" then has the meaning of "real being." However, this does not divide the totality of being into two specific kinds, but essential being is an intelligible part of all being: as everything-which-is has a meaning, so every existent contains the being corresponding to this meaning. It is not very clear whether this view could be identified with the Thomistic conception that the act of existing of a particular entity is determined by its inner intensity — a correspondence which points toward the proportionality between a particular essence and its act of existing. For Stein, the notion of "being" encompasses an essential and an existential aspect, and the characteristic mark of being is the unfolding of its meaning both within the essential and the existential realm.

1Stein, p. 302.
2Ibid., p. 303.
In the progression of this investigation, a variety of beings encountered led to a single Source. This differentiated variety resulted from the very act of unfolding. But only as unfolded can being be experienced; only from a multiple consideration can the search lead back to the primal Unity. In retrospect, the quest for the meaning of being gains in clarity if this process is reversed, if the unity of the First and Perfect Being is considered as the rich and compact Source whence the unfolding proceeds. For God, who is His own essence and existence in perfect identity and unity, is this fullness of being that manifests itself through the limited being of the world as knowable. God is the original Ground (Urgrund) without beginning and end, and in His enduring actuality both the beginning and end of all being other than Himself. Everything—that—is originates in the fullness of Being and leads back to it; it unfolds from unity to multiplicity and folds back to unity.

The unfolding of the meaning of being proceeds in a movement from concealment to revealedness, and the very essence of unfolding consists in the continuous "disconcealing of something concealed." Unfolding always implies gradation, partiality, and thus finiteness: what is contained in plenitude in the infinite Being manifests itself to the knowing mind under the aspects of finiteness, for both existential and essential being have been recognized as limited. Essential is the timeless unfolding beyond the opposition of potency and act, and real being is unfolding out of an essential form into

5Ibid., p. 511.
4Ibid., p. 504.
space and time. The timeless unfolding of essential being refers back to the realm beyond space and time, the realm where forms are "resting in themselves" as meaning-giving units, but are unfolded out of the unity of meaning which is the divine Logos.

To this timeless unfolding of whatness is added another unfolding: things are formed into the temporal and spatial world. A thing could not unfold itself in this way if it were not determined, if it were not rooted in the essential form which gives direction and orientation to the further unfolding in the realm of existence, which gives intelligibility to what otherwise would be chaos. All real (existential) being is thus grounded in essential being, in the pure forms which Stein ultimately identified with the divine Ideas. All lawfulness and order of the created world rests on their unchangeableness; all multiplicity is unified through them in the one divine Being.

The unfolding of essential being into space and time involves an enriching addition to its own proper mode of being — an addition which results from the creative act of God by which essentialities are "put into Dasein," by which they enter the world of temporal limitation and thus become "real" in the sense in which only God is real. Only in this state of realization or concretization do they obtain the momentary actuality which is an image of

---

5 Ibid., p. 307.
6 Ibid., pp. 302 and 316.
7 Ibid., p. 310.
8 Ibid., p. 316.
the ever-enduring actuality of the infinite Being, an image of the fullness of the Eternal Now. The divine "I am," however, is the exemplar for the totality of this unfolding, namely for the timeless intelligibility of things as well as for their contingent existential reality. Everything that is, is pre-formed in God and by Him called into existence. Everything that is can be known and understood only because it is encountered in man's experiential world, because as being it is open to the human mind, and because the knower can penetrate this very revealedness and attain its fundamental structure or intelligibility derived from the essential being of a pure form. In their timelessness, these forms or essentialities are uncreated; yet considered from the point of view of their unfolding, they are finite insofar as they imply a limited meaning which then is concretized as a particular entity. They are not able to cause this concretization by themselves, because essential being by its very nature lacks the intensity and efficacy needed to break forth into actuality. The source for this existential being is God, Who by the very act of creation causes essentialities to cross the boundary that separates the existential from the essential world, the boundary at which essences enter the spatio-temporal world and henceforth can be known only by means of concrete reality. Thus the world of experience is the starting point for knowledge, but an elaborate analysis makes the penetration into the essence or meaning of a concrete reality and thus the phenomenological intuition of essences possible. 9

9 Ibid., p. 321.

10 Ibid., p. 309; cf. chap. IV, pp. 51-52.
The order of creation necessitates time as the element whereby the temporal separates itself from the Eternal, the finite from the Infinite, the bounded from the Unbounded. It is true that the finite essentialities were discovered as temporally unlimited. Yet they are distinguished from the all-encompassing fullness of the divine Being by their limitation to be something but not everything, and by their orientation to temporal realization. Temporal-real being is thus the progressive realization of essential possibilities, a progression which involves the constant transition to actuality or the height of being. Essential being has a certain perfection proper to its mode of being, but this perfection lacks vitality. Its sublimity is a dead one and attains life in its concretization, which concretization is caused by the Fullness of Being.

Stein's position seems to combine in an interesting way the essentialist with the existentialist position: essentialist in all her emphasis on the essential mode of being, its ordering and harmonizing role in a chaotic world, and its intuitive knowability; existentialist in her clear elucidation of the fact that finite essences are unable to provide their own existence, that this actualization is derived from God who is pure Actuality and pure Intelligibility (Logos) and who is both in perfect identity. The very essence of God is existence — a discovery which Aristotle had already made of his unmoved mover when he recognized that "there must be a principle whose very essence is actuality." In his attack against the Platonic position as he

11 Ibid., pp. 326-27.
12 Metaphysics, Bk. XII, Ch. 6, 1071 b, 20, p. 378.
understood it, and thus against any pure essentialist position, Aristotle was right in pointing out that "nothing ... is gained even if we suppose eternal substances, as the believers of the Forms do, unless there be in them some principle which can cause change ..." This actual principle is not contained within the forms, but Pure Act as the fullness of existence is necessary to make the forms enter the realm of existence. God and He alone can bring about this crossing of the boundary line between the essential and the existential sphere, for everything finite is encompassed by His divine Spirit (thus He is master over all essence) and is causally grounded in the divine Being (thus He is master over all existence). For in Him, there is no separation between Spirit, Essence, or Being.

Concrete reality reveals this fullness of being. The unity-giving principle is realized in the world of experience and thus shines through the limitations of objects and experiences. Such a principle is necessary so that things may reveal themselves as what they are, but it also necessitates the penetrating and searching mind in order to grasp and understand this revealedness. This openness is a sign by which entities refer beyond themselves, by which the fleetingness and contingency of finite being discloses the necessity of an infinite Being, that the imperfection of all finite essences discloses the necessity of an infinitely perfect Essence which provides ground for unity and order — a realm of infinity where Essence and Existence

13Ibid., 1071 a, 14-16, p. 377.
14Stein, pp. 325-26.
are identical.

Thus all finite being is formed out of God into itself. Its essence is determined by the divine Essence, but remains in shadow if compared to the intense light of perfect and ever-enduring actuality. For in its finiteness, it cannot embrace the fullness of the Pure Act; it cannot reach the divine perfection in extension or in intensity. Every finite being shares to a certain degree in the participation in being, but it does not even reach this partial perfection in its plenitude because of the condition of its "fallen" nature. This metaphysical "fall" occurred parallel to the "fall" in the ethico-religious order. It signifies a change in nature, a break in the essential determination of things, a distortion which gives the key to the understanding of the often apparent discontinuity between concretized essence and pure form. This explains the difficulty of the human mind to grasp the intelligibility of things by a vision of their essence, and to transcend finite being in order to reach the Eternal. Heidegger's "fall" seems to be another way of expressing this discontinuity and brokenness: It implies a state of unauthenticity and distortion, a forlornness in a world of concealment where the pure revelation of being is hindered, where its transparency is obscured. Heidegger goes so far as to negate any essential determination which makes the structural intelligibility of a thing possible. He thus posits a world without teleology, a world of "projections" in which human existence constitutes itself by the progressive realization of possibilities.

\[15\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 225-27.}\]
It is the world of those philosophers for whom "existence" precedes "essence", for whom there is no design, no intelligibility, and thus no unfolding of being out of an essential into an existential realm.

This leads to a concluding comparison of two ontological endeavors which will show more clearly Edith Stein's position: did Heidegger's question for the meaning of being find a satisfying answer, and was Stein's attempt to ascend to the meaning of Being a successful one? Heidegger does not intend to give an answer; but a meaningful question should somehow reveal the answer from the very orientation and direction of the question, for a question cannot even be asked if it does not at least imply a pre-ontological comprehension of that which is asked for. Starting his quest from the analysis of Dasein as the eminent and only "place" in which being manifests and reveals itself, the conclusion would follow that a thorough analysis of Dasein as carried out by Heidegger in his fundamental distinction between unauthentic and authentic existence, must ultimately lead to the revelation of being. It cannot be overlooked that for him, man provides the only revelation of being, that the very question of being can be asked meaningfully only because of the existence of human Dasein, which not only provides the starting point for the quest, but also constitutes the horizon within which the investigation will necessarily proceed. This dependency of being upon human existence stands in direct opposition to the dependency of human existence upon being in E. Stein's ontology, where an Eternal Now is necessary for a temporal now,

where Being is the measure of man's existence and the measure of time. This Eternal Now is the foundation stone of Stein's philosophy, not providing the explicit starting point, but guiding the whole search for being into the definite direction it actually takes. For Heidegger, the mere assumption that there are "eternal truths" needs the proof "that in all eternity Dasein was and shall be."¹⁷

The fundamental question remains whether Being determines time, or whether time determines being; whether the unlimited, infinite, and eternal is necessary for time and temporal being, or whether temporality suffices for the comprehension and attainment of being. Does this quest for being involve a vertical or a horizontal search? Does it need to transcend the finiteness of human existence beyond itself (and the only true contrast to this finiteness would be infinity), or is it sufficient to break through the horizontal boundaries of Dasein by making it transparent in its structure of being-in-the world?

It is evident that these two different modes of "transcending" indicate the respective approaches of Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger to the problem of being, and it is also evident that Stein reaches Being, while Heidegger does not go beyond the question and its analysis. Being's dependence on Dasein is understandable in the sense that the whole question of being becomes relevant only with the existence of Dasein as having the fundamental structure of comprehension of being — the openness of spirit to the revela-

¹⁷Ibid., * 44, p. 227.
¹⁸Ibid., * 43, p. 212.
tion of being Stein speaks about. For the question for the meaning of being can be asked only because man exists and has the capacity to know. Being thus does not depend on human Dasein in the ontological but only in an epistemological sense. The being of any existent discloses itself only because there is a spiritual faculty able to comprehend being. This orientation of spirit to being and the openness of being to spirit is possible because both contain the aspect of "beingness": entity as something—which—is can only be understood by spirit as something—which—is and at the same time possessing comprehension of being. For Heidegger, the circle of being seems closed, since for him all modes of being are within the realm of Dasein and temporality. Only a true conception of the "analogy of being" seems to provide the key to the solution of this circular movement; it would put being, human existence, and entities into their hierarchical place. But a hierarchy suggests and requires a vertical line, which implies Dasein's going beyond itself ... and this is the very step Heidegger refuses to take.

From the very start, he so narrowed his question that only the positivistic limitation of finiteness could be the outcome. Thus the result is a priori contained in the question and the method. Everything in his position of the question is planned in such a way as to prove the temporality of being. All avenues to the fullness of being are blocked — "there are no essences, no meanings, no eternal truths."¹⁹ Dasein, understanding, and discovery may demand for their own clarification something independent of themselves, some-

¹⁹Stein, p. 134 note 42.
thing timeless that enters temporality in and through themselves. But the horizon of temporality cannot be transcended. And if temporality is the last existential determination of Dasein, then being for Heidegger cannot lie outside of this temporality, as it so obviously does for E. Stein, who reaches Being from the totality of Dasein's spatio-temporally limited existence.

Heidegger had the key to an ascent to being by his rigorously elaborated conception of human existence. In the Ego, he gave full rights to being, defining human existence by its comprehension of being. Thus he cleared the way — the critical problem of how the Self could get outside of itself became irrelevant — but the problem of how it could get beyond itself could not be solved by Heidegger. Since being is confined to temporality, man does not search for something timeless that would give meaning to his existential situation; he does not engage in a quest for the fullness of being and thus the quest for God. Delp considers it as the tragedy of our time that it does not find man because it does not seek God, and that it does not seek God because it has no men ... This is not a choice to be made between a pure ego- or anthropocentric and a pure theocentric approach to philosophy, but it involves the discovery of a synthesis that will give the right place to things, to man, and to God; that is guided in its discovery of Being by the perfection and intelligibility found in each existent. Edith Stein seems to achieve such a synthesis: where Heidegger limits his quest to the being

20Ibid.

of human existence, there Stein discovers the way for a genuine ontology that transcends any particular realm of beings and thus can lead to a true "ontophany," a manifestation or revelation of Being. Stein's ontology is complete because it takes account of all aspects of being without limitation to either the existential or the essential realm. Her ontology is characterized by the unfolding of the meaning of being both within the realm of essentialities and of concrete existents. The process of this unfolding is open to the searching mind. It is most evident in man's own being, and thus Stein has chosen man's existential awareness as the path to enter the structural pattern of the unfolding of the meaning of being. By transcending the limited realms of existence and essence, by discovering their communality beyond a temporal separation and the fullness of being beyond any purely formal dimension, she had the material to organize this knowledge in an ontology engulfing all the realms of being.

Precisely because man has not only an understanding for his own but also for other kinds of being, he is not limited to his own being as the horizon within which to attain the meaning of being. Edith Stein took man's own being as the starting point and thus discovered the comprehension of being in its root. But she also acknowledged the possibility of taking the being of things or the First Being as starting point in the quest for the meaning of being. Because of the relatedness of everything—that is, because of its common and all-encompassing intelligibility, the different kinds of being refer to each other and beyond themselves. Also a thing must be "questioned" if man wants to understand it. It will not answer in the same way as man, since it has no awareness of its own being. But it is and has meaning that
expresses itself in and through its constitution. It is "phenomenon" and as such able to reveal being; all being is characterized by this self-revelation.²²

It is interesting to follow the development of phenomenology from Husserl to Heidegger and finally to Edith Stein. Husserl was concerned with the constitution of the world for consciousness that could be analyzed in the immanence of the stream of consciousness. The subject is thus the starting and the central point of his philosophical search, to such an extent that all possibility of regaining objectivity from this sphere of immanence and subject-relativity was lost.²³ Heidegger's phenomenology led back to the notion of being, and thus re-opened the path to objectivity. By his "return to things," he made ontology possible again, but he understood "being" in such a narrow way that the plenitude of being was concealed.²⁴ His ontology is not one of being, but of "human consciousness" (von Menschbewusstsein), an ontology that intended to constitute an absolute human existence as the essence of being.²⁵ Heidegger sought an ontological solution, but in his inadequate analysis he identified existence and essence "in the synthetic unity of the divinized self enclosed in the world."²⁶ Yet he also

²²Stein, pp. 141-42, note 60.
²³Stein, "Husserl's Phänomenologie ...", p. 326.
²⁴Erich Przywara, S.J., "Drei Richtungen der Phänomenologie", Stimmen der Zeit (Freiburg) CIV, 259-62.
²⁵Ibid., p. 259.
recognized that such an identity does not hold in the existential realm of human beings because of the fundamental tension that cannot be resolved.

By her own ontology, Edith Stein contributed to the advance of phenomenology beyond Husserl and Heidegger, an advance which "reconstituted the method of phenomenology itself in function of a metaphysics of being and becoming." Through her work, phenomenology could make contact with reality again, and it is in this "turn to the object" that her challenging fusion of phenomenology and scholasticism consists, thus enabling her to attain the fullness of being by means of phenomenological analysis and the intuition of essences. The object of knowledge "has been returned to the concrete existent," the idea of knowledge "has been returned to the process of real becoming" — by this decisive step, modern philosophy can "overcome idealism in principle as well as in profession." Through Stein's version of phenomenology, the modern thinker is enabled to investigate reality by taking account of the contributions to the discovery of truth made by Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, as well as Husserl and Heidegger. He can grasp the intelligibility of everything—that-is as a totality, and thus transcend temporality and finiteness in the attainment of the Eternal and Infinite Being. He can find a true existential way to God.

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES


II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS


B. ARTICLES


——. "Review of Endliches und Ewiges Sein," Modern Schoolman, XXIX, 139-45.


Przywara, Erich, S.J. "Thomas von Aquin deutsch," Stimmen der Zeit (Freiburg, 1951), CXXI, 335-86.

——. "Drei Richtungen der Phänomenologie," Stimmen der Zeit (Freiburg, 1925) CXV, 259-62.

III. COMPARATIVE MATERIAL


Aristotle. "Metaphysics"
"On the Soul"


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Kathe Granderath has been read and approved by a board of three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

[Signature]

[Date]