Edith Stein and the Possibility of History as a Science

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1. Introduction

This paper focuses Edith Stein's philosophical views about the discipline of history, and primarily on those views of her early period. Stein thought that history could become a science, and in her first book, *On the Problem of Empathy*, she provided an account of the priori metaphysical and epistemological foundations for a scientific history.[1] In this paper, I explain her account and then respond to several objections to it, the most pressing of which is that it implies that evil behavior done by historical figures cannot be accounted for by her account of history as a science.

[1] The English translation of Edith Stein's *On the Problem of Empathy* (translated by Waltraut Stein, Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1989) is notoriously imperfect; I quote from it when the translated passage strikes me as adequate, but in places where it does not, I have provided a translation of the German edition of *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* (Freiburg: Herder Publishing, 2008, originally published in 1917) along with page references both to it and the extant English translation. (Henceforth, "*Empathy*".) For background to this text: Marianne Sawicki's *Body, Text, and Science: the Literacy of Investigative Practices and the Phenomenology of Edith Stein,* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1997), henceforth "*Body*", contains a masterful overview of Stein's philosophical influences, and Mette Lebech "Stein's Contribution to the Phenomenological Foundation of the Science of the Humanities", in Harm Klueting and Edeltraud Klueting (editors), *Edith Stein's Itinerary: Phenomenology, Christian Philosophy, and Carmelite Spirituality*, (Aschendorff Verlag, 2021), pages 336-339, discusses the historical context of Stein's project of founding the cultural sciences, as well as some of her later work. More generally, Theodore Plantinga *Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) and Frederick Beiser "Dilthey's Defense of Historicism", in *Interpreting Dilthey*, edited by Eric Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) discuss some of the challenges to the idea that history might become a science.

According to Stein, other cultural inquiries can be sciences only if history as a science is possible, since other putative cultural sciences are based on historical inquiry.[2] Stein (*Empathy,* page 93) writes,

> The cultural sciences describe the products of the spirit, though this alone does not satisfy them. They also pursue, mostly unseparated from this, what they call “history” in the broadest sense. This includes cultural history, literary history, history of language, art history, etc. They pursue the formation of spiritual products or their birth in the spirit.[3]

However, there is a prima facie powerful argument against the possibility of a scientific history. Necessarily, history can be a science only if it can be an empirical science.[4] But, necessarily, an endeavor is an empirical science only if it aims to discover causal regularities among types of events. However, history does not aim to discover causal regularities among types of events.[5] But the aims of an endeavor are essential to that endeavor being what it is, and so history cannot aim to discover causal regularities among types of events. So, history cannot be an empirical science. So, history cannot be a science.

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[2] In a somewhat later work, Edith Stein *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities,* translated by Mary Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki, (Washington: ICS Publications, 2000), page 298, distinguishes between cultural and historical sciences, and seems to treat them as co-equal branches rather than taking the former to require grounding from the latter.

[3] In her later introductory lectures on philosophy, she presents a somewhat more nuanced perspective on how the other cultural sciences relate to history; see, for example, Edith Stein. *Einführung in die Philosophie*, (Freiburg: Herder Publishing, 2004), page 230/744. (Henceforth, “*Einführung*“.)

[4] Note that this argument doesn’t assume that all sciences are empirical sciences. Mathematics is an a priori science. And perhaps a properly developed phenomenology would be an a priori science as well.

[5] For a contrary view, see Carl Hempel, “The Function of General Laws of History”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (1942), 35-48.

A standard response to this argument is to distinguish two broad categories of empirical sciences: natural sciences, which aim to discover causal regularities, and cultural sciences, of which history might be one, that have a different aim, which is to produce *understanding* (Verstehen).[6] This response is satisfactory only if it includes an explanation of what understanding is and why an endeavor that aims for understanding rather than discovering causal regularities could still be a science. My exposition of Stein's account of history as a science will show how Stein meets this challenge.

Here's a roadmap of this paper. In the next section, I discuss a Husserlian conception of what it is to be a science that Stein also accepts. Briefly, this conception says that a discipline is a science when it has a unified subject matter the essence of which grounds both a set of a priori principles governing the objects studied by the science and a set of priori principles concerning which methodology is proper for pursuing this science. In section three, I discuss Stein's account of the nature of understanding. In section four, I briefly discuss Stein's account of empathy, which is necessary for us to understand the objects of historical sciences. These objects are the focus of section five. Section six contains her account of history as a science, as well as a brief discussion of the differences between historical sciences and the science of psychology. Finally, in section seven, I discuss and respond to interesting objections to Stein's conception of history as a science, one of the most pressing of which is that it implies that evil behavior is not historically explainable given Stein's conception.

[6] See Michael Forster, "Dilthey's Importance for Hermeneutics", in *Interpreting Dilthey*, edited by Eric Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pages 72-80, and Jos de Mol "Leben erfasst hier Leben: Dilthey as a Philosopher of (the) Life (Sciences)", also in Nelson 2019, for discussion of the history of this distinction, especially with regards to Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works Volume III: The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences,* edited by Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), a prominent defender of it. De Mol also argues that, for Dilthey, there is a third kind of science: life sciences aim at giving functional explanations rather than describing causal regularities.

2. A Husserlian Conception of Science

Each science has a distinctive subject matter. Getting clear about a science's subject matter—the kinds of objects it studies, and the kinds of properties and relations it attributes to them—is important because otherwise we risk either omission or incursion.[7] If we don't demarcate the subject matter of a science properly, we might miss objects that should be among the subject matter of that science—and if so, we run the risk that no other science studies them either. This is the sin of omission. On the other hand, an improper demarcation of a science might include objects in the putative subject matter of that science even though the methods of that science are not appropriate to use when theorizing about those objects. This is the sin of incursion.[8]

According to Edmund Husserl *Logical Investigations, volume I*, translated by J.N. Findlay, New York: Routledge Publishing, 2005), pages 12 and 144-145, a science is properly demarcated only if the objects it investigates are genuinely unified rather than disparate or merely accidently related.[9] Objects are genuinely unified rather than disparate or merely

[7] See Husserl (*Logical Investigations vol I,* pages 12-13). As an anonymous referee has pointed out, a distinction similar to Dilthey's is drawn using the terms "ideographic sciences" and "nomothetic sciences"; see, for example, Edith Stein *Der Afbau der menschlichen Person*, (Freiburg: Herder Publishing, 2004), page 20, who attributes this distinction to "the Baden school", which includes Windelband and Rickert. See also Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, pages 310-311.

[8] Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. I*, page 13, charges psychologism with committing the sin of incursion. According to psychologism, logic is a branch of psychology, and hence the methodology of psychology in general is part of the methodology of logic. For this reason, A proper demarcation of a science of pure logic would show that its objects—in this case, abstract objects such as meanings or propositions—are not among the objects studied by psychology.

[9] This conception of science is also advocated later in Edith Stein in her *Finite and Eternal Being*: *an Attempt to Ascend to the Meaning of Being,* translated by Walter Redmond (Washington: ISC Publications, 2023), pages 21-26, in which she claims that the diversity of sciences is explained by the diversity of that which is, that the rules for the procedure of a science are determined by the nature of the sphere of objects it studies, which is why in the initial development of a science there is a lot of worry about clarifying its basic concepts, and that philosophy has the job of elucidating fundamental principles of all the sciences.

accidentally related only if they have a common essence.[10] According to Stein (*Empathy*, chapter four), the objects that form the subject matter of history are spiritual subjects and what they produce in their capacity as spiritual subjects. To be a spiritual subject is not merely to have intentional states or to have an immaterial part, but rather it is to have complex collections of intentional states that constitute understandable wholes. In short, the subject matter of history is what is understandable.

If objects have a common essence, then there are foundational propositions that state what that common essence is, and the metaphysical consequences of having that essence, e.g., what properties that essence grounds or prevents the exemplification of.[11] We successfully demarcate a science by grasping the essence of its subject matter and knowing these foundational propositions. As Edith Stein notes in "Concerning Heinrich Gustav Steinmann's Paper "On the Systematic Position of Phenomenology"", translated by Evan Clarke, in *The Sources of Husserl's 'Ideas I'*, edited by Andrea Staiti and Evan Clarke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), page 312, notes, phenomenology is prior to all other sciences not because it provides their axioms, but rather because its job is to clarify those axioms.[12] Such a construal of the relationship between phenomenology and all other sciences presupposes that all other sciences have axioms, i.e., foundational propositions.

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[10] Objects can have a common essence and yet each have more to their essences than what is common. For the sake of an example, I assume that all frogs are essentially frogs—being a frog is a common essence for each frog. But for all that is said, each individual frog might have some further aspect to their essence. Note also that I do not use "essence" and "type" interchangeably. One can belong to a type without it being essential that one belong to it; for example, I am a professor—being a professor is a type that I belong to—but I am not essentially a professor. Some objects have a common essence when there is a type such that each of these objects essentially belong to that type. I thank an anonymous referee for pushing me to clarify this.

[11] For example, Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. I,* page 110, in which he tells us that the "propositions of universal arithmetic - the nomology of arithmetic we may call it - are laws rooted *in the ideal essence of the genus Number."*

[12] Henceforth, ""Concerning"".

As the name suggests, these foundational propositions are among the basic principles of a science, but they need not and often will not exhaust them. Husserl classifies these foundational propositions as a priori.[13] But empirical sciences also have empirical basic principles.[14] Let's now briefly discuss Husserl's account of the a priori/a posteriori distinction. For Husserl, *Logical Investigations, volume II*, translated by J.N. Findlay (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2005), Third Investigation, sections 11 and 12, a belief is justified *a priori* if and only if it is justified by intuitions of abstract objects, which include types, essences, and meanings.[15] Husserl holds that we have such intuitions.[16] An intuition is a representation of an object that directly refers to the object and presents it as being present. Perceptions of objects are intuitions in this sense. Here is a simple example to illustrate the thought that we can perceive abstract

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[13] That all sciences have a priori foundational principles is a decidedly Kantian aspect of Husserl's conception of science; compare with Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, translated by Gary Hatfield, Michael Friedman, Henry Alison, and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pages 183-185/4: 468-470. This is a conception of science that Stein implicitly endorses in both *the Problem of Empathy* and beyond: it is why Stein in her *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities,* page 303, claims that along with empirical humanistic endeavors, there will be a priori humanistic principles. See also Edith Stein's "Critique of Theodor Elsenhans and August Messer (Edith Stein's Draft)", translated by Evan Clarke, in *The Sources of Husserl's 'Ideas I'*, edited by Andrea Staiti and Evan Clarke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), pages 454-456. (Henceforth, ""Critique"".)

[14] See Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. I*, pages 52-53, for discussion of this, as well as some tempered skepticism about our ability to discover empirical foundational principles. See also Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II*, page 8, where he states that natural laws are not grounded in essences and that natural necessity is not essential (metaphysical) necessity.

[15] See also Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II,* page 8. See Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. I,* pages 233 and 238, for the view that meanings are abstract "ideal" objects. As will be clear shortly, our a priori knowledge is not limited to knowledge of meanings; *Husserl, Logical Investigations vol. II*, page 21, holds that we also have "synthetic a priori" knowledge.

[16] See Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II*, 2nd investigation. Stein follows suit; for commentary on Stein, see Mary Catharine Baseheart, *Person in the World: Introduction to the Philosophy of Edith Stein* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Press), page 48, Sarah Borden *Edith Stein* (London: Continuum, 2003), pages 60-61 and 137, Sawicki *Body,* page 55, Dermot Moran. "Edith Stein's Encounter with Edmund Husserl and Her Phenomenology of the Person", in Elisa Magri and Dermot Moran (editors), *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, Dordrecht: Springer Publishing, 2017), page 34, Alasdair MacIntyre, *Edith Stein: a Philosophical Prologue 1913-1922* (Rowman and Littlefield Publications, 2006) (henceforth, *"Edith Stein")*, page 21, Mette Lebech, *the Philosophy of Edith Stein: from Phenomenology to Metaphysics* (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), page xi. Thomas Osb "The Method of Stein's Realism", in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, edited by Mette Lebech and John Gurmin (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), pages 318-139, notes that, for Husserl and Stein, intuition of essences are acts founded on ordinary sense perceptions; this will be discussed more soon.

objects, including essences.[17] There is a red ball on the floor in front of me. I first see the red ball. But more in the ball can be seen: I can see the redness of the ball.[18] I now focus on the redness of the ball, and see the type that this redness is an instance of, i.e., redness in general. I engage in a similar exercise with a blue frisbee, and eventually achieve a perception of a type, blueness in general. I now attend to each type, and *see* that they are necessarily incompatible: nothing can be red all over and blue all over at the same time. I see that this is the case because I can see the essences of each of these types, and see that these essences are incompatible with each other.

Perceptions of types and essences require as a matter of strict necessity intuitions of particulars.[19] I cannot intuit the essence of redness without having intuitions of a red thing, its redness, and redness in general. Perceptions of types and essences warrant general knowledge rather than merely knowledge of particular facts: because I know that redness and blueness have incompatible essences, I can know that, necessarily, in general nothing can be red all over and blue all over at the same time, rather than merely knowing that this particular red ball can't simultaneously be a blue ball. Husserl accordingly uses the term "a priori" to classify knowledge of necessary general truths of this sort.[20]

With this in mind, let's return to the Husserlian conception of a science. Recall that, if objects have a common essence, then there are foundational propositions that state what that

[17] Compare with Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II,* pages 175-176; see pages 350-351 of Kris McDaniel, "Metaphysics, History, Phenomenology", *Res Philosophica* 91.3 (2014): 339-365 for discussion. (Henceforth, ""Phenomenology"".)
[18] This redness is itself a particular—it is an individualized property that Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. I*, pages 85-86, *Logical Investigations vol.* II, pages 28-29, calls a "moment".
[19] In most cases, these intuitions will come from perception, but in some cases, imaginations are suitable as intuitions. See Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II,* page 172 and Stein "Critique", page 450.
[20] See *Husserl, Logical Investigations vol. II*: Third Investigation, and McDaniel "Phenomenology", pages 352-353, for commentary.

common essence is and what follows from having that essence. Given the above account of the a priori, these foundational principles are a priori principles.[21] This is why Husserl holds that an inquiry is scientific only if there are a priori principles about the objects it investigates.

These a priori principles are of two kinds. First, there are what we can call *object governing* principles; these are principles about the objects of the science. The second sort of principles are methodological principles, which though presumably grounded in object governing principles, are principles that direct us how to investigate these objects.[22] Let's next discuss what Stein takes these principles to be; we'll start this discussion with the methodological principle that the goal of a historical science is understanding rather than knowledge of causal regularities.

3. Stein's Account of Understanding

What is understanding? Stein, *Empathy*, page 95/84, succinctly remarks that:

> Understanding means nothing other than experiencing (rather than having objectively) the transition from one part to another within an experiential whole, and all objectivity, all object-meaning is constituted solely in experiences of this kind. An action is a unit of understanding or meaning because those partial

[21] See also Stein "Concerning", pages 301-303.
[22] See, e.g., Stein *Empathy*, page 105/95, where she says that phenomenology strives for clarity about the spiritual sciences and the natural sciences. "Klarheit uber die geisteswissenschaftliche methode wie über die naturwissenschaftliche gibt die reflektierende Erforschung des betreffenden wissenschaftlichen Bewußtseins, wie sie die Phänomenologie ansztrebt." Later, Stein *Empathy,* page 95, writes, "… there must be an objective basis for the cultural sciences beside the clarification of method, an ontology of the spirit corresponding to the ontology of nature."

experiences that constitute it stand together in one experienceable connection. And in this sense, experience and expression form an understandable whole.[23]

Let's consider an uncontroversial example of understanding in Stein's sense, both in order to illustrate her idea and also because it will later provide helpful analogies to consider: when one successfully reads, one understands what one is reading. Suppose that you are reading a well-written journal article.[24] This article consists of a series of sentences, but not every series of sentences corresponds to a well-written paper. An understandable sentence is one in which its component parts have meanings that combine into a coherent meaning that is the sense of the whole sentence—and as you read the sentence, you experience the transition from meaningful part to meaningful part, and when you finish reading it, you see how all the parts hang together in an intelligible whole. An understandable paragraph is not merely a sequence of understandable sentences, since meaningful sentences must combine into a coherent paragraph—and you see that the paragraph makes sense when you see how those meaningful sentences coherently combine. Similar remarks apply to larger parts of the paper that are composed of paragraphs, such as sections of the paper, or even the paper as a whole.

When a historical investigation succeeds, we understand in this same sense the expressions, actions, and personalities of historical figures. But before exploring this further, let's ask why understanding rather than knowledge of causal regularities is the goal of historical investigation. There are two reasons. First, there might not be any causal regularities to have

[23] "Verstehen heißt gar nichts anderes als den Übergang von einem Teil zum anderen innerlfalb eines Erlebnisganzen erleben (nicht: gegenständlich haben), und aller objektive, aller Gegenstandssinn konstituiert sich allein in Erlebnissen dieser Art. Eine Handlung ist Verständnis- oder Sinneinheit, weil die sie konstituierenden Teilerlebnisse in einem erlebbaren Zusammenhange stehen. Und im seihen Sinne bilden Erlebnis und Ausdruck ein Verständnisganzes".

[24] You are invited to consider a different article if this one doesn't meet the standard!

knowledge of. Stein seemingly denies that human behavior is governed by deterministic laws. Stein notably typically refrains from calling the relation between, e.g., emotion and its expression, or intention and the resulting action, a causal relation; rather, Stein, *Empathy*, pages 84-85, typically calls it "motivation".[25] Possibly, she refrains because she takes causal connections to imply both necessary connections between their relata as well as subsumption under universal regularities, neither of which is true of motivational connections.[26]

But the second reason is that this understanding of motivation is actually a superior epistemic good than knowledge of a causal regularity. Its superiority is why we desired understanding even in the case of natural sciences. Stein, *Empathy*, pages 93-94, notes that

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[25] But see Stein "Critique", page 457, where she explicitly describes motivation as a kind of causality distinct from "mathematical causality"; it is "eine Motivationskausalität" in the original German, found in Edith Stein, "*Freiheit und Gnade" und Weitere Beiträge zu Phänomenologie und Ontologie (1917-1937)* (Freiburg: Herder Publishing, 2014), page 309, in other words, a motivational causality. Also notable are Stein's remarks in *Einführung,* pages 210/671-672, "Der Zusammenhang der Erlebnisse, wonach eines vermöge seines Sinnesgehaltes ein anderes hervorruft (z. B. die Furcht vor einer Gefahr eine Abwehrhandlung), heißt Motivation. Es handelt sich dabei um ein Grundprinzip des geistigen Lebens, das in seiner Bedeutung mit dem Kausalprinzip auf gleiche Stufe zu stellen ist."

[26] Sawicki, *Body,* carefully details the likely sources of Stein's views of motivation; see, for example, pages 23, 26 which contain her discussion of Pfander, who claims that a willing is not caused by an inclination but by an I on the basis of that inclination, and for whom motives don't cause willings but rather disclose their grounds; Sawicki (page 34) says of Scheler that like causes cause like effects is a principle that doesn't apply in the case of human action; Sawicki (page 57) notes Husserl's distinction between motivation and causation. Finally, Sawicki (pages 264-265) claims that, for Stein, causes yield "musts", but motives do not. See also Sarah Borden "What Makes You You? Individuality in Edith Stein" in Joyce Berkman (editor). *Contemplating Edith Stein* (Notre Dame University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), page 28, who claims that motives are intelligible but not necessary connections between acts, and Borden *Edith Stein,* pages 31-32, who claims that causation is deterministic and necessitating, but motivation is not, although both are "generating" relations. Sawicki and Borden's views are clearly supported by remarks in Stein *Einführung*, page 210/674, in which Stein denies that motivational laws induce necessary connections among events, but rather indicate "essential possibilities". Ermest McCullough, "Edith Stein and Intersubjectivity", in *Husserl and Stein*, edited by Richard Feist and William Sweet (The Council for Research and Values in Philosophy, 2003), page 131 also claims that Stein rejects a "sequential, dependency and necessity" model of causation. See also Lebench *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, page xiii and Jadwiga Guerrero van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity in Edith Stein's Writings: Investigated in Comparison to the Writings of the Doctors of the Church and the Magisterial Documents of the Catholic Church* (Berlin: De Gruyter Publishing, 2019), pages 109-111. In section 2.1 of Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran, "Edith Stein", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (editor) https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/stein/ Szanto and Moran discuss Stein's complicated views about determinism and motivation. Note that Stein "Critique", page 460 denies that fundamental psychological principles can be formulated with mathematical precision.

> Earlier, people made unreasonable demands of natural science. It was to make natural occurrences “intelligible” (perhaps to prove that nature was a creation of the spirit of God). As long as natural science made no objections to this, it could not develop properly.

Because “natural”, i.e., nonhistorical, phenomena are not motivated to exist, but merely caused to exist, there is no understanding to be had in physics, chemistry, etc.[27] We had to abandon the goal of understanding natural phenomena in order to make progress towards an attainable goal, namely, discovering causal patterns among natural phenomena.

Fortunately, we have since made progress at this more attainable goal. But, as Stein, *Empathy,* pages 93-94, notes:

> Today there is the opposite danger. Elucidating causally is not enough, but people set up causal elucidation absolutely as the scientific ideal. This would be harmless if this interpretation were confined to natural scientists. One could calmly allow them the satisfaction of looking down on “unscientific” (because not “exact”) cultural science, if the enthusiasm for this method had not gripped cultural scientists themselves. People do not want to be inexact and so cultural sciences have gone along in many ways and have lost sight of their own goals.

[27] As noted by Kris McDaniel in “Edith Stein: *The Problem of Empathy*”, *Ten Neglected Philosophical Classics*, edited by Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), page 218, Stein was an atheist when *The Problem of Empathy* was drafted and later published. (Henceforth, “Edith Stein”.)

Given that history seeks understanding, our next tasks are to discuss the objects that Stein thinks are apt to be understood, and the phenomenological capacities by which they are understood, which is primarily by way of empathy.

4. Stein's Account of Empathy

According to Stein, empathy is a kind of irreducible perceptual act by which we intuit other persons and their psychological states.[28] Suppose a child in front of me is crying. On Stein's view, I do not merely see her outward behavior. I also see her sadness. I do not infer that the child is sad from her crying, and I do not infer that the child is a person from whatever set of behaviors she might present to me.[29] I non-inferentially know that this child is a person who is sad. In order for me to non-inferentially know this, I must have intuitions of her personhood and her sadness.[30] These intuitions are instances of empathy.[31] Because I have empathy, I can know the emotions of other people.[32]

When I see you as loving someone, I can thereby know that you see them as loveable.[33] However, one can see someone as loveable without believing that they are loveable, just as one can see two lines as being equal in length even though one knows that they are not. Similarly, I can be afraid of what I know to be not at all dangerous. In such cases, I am aware that the

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[28] See Stein, *Empathy,* page 11, as well as Stein *Einführung*, pages 149, 438/108.

[29] Instead, her status as a person is "announced" via empathy; see Stein, *Empathy*, page 34.

[30] As noted by Shaun Gallagher, Shaun. 2019. "Dilthey and Empathy", in *Interpreting Dilthey*, edited by Eric Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pages 152-153, Stein endorses a perceptual account of empathy.

[31] We know that someone is a person by way of empathy, but empathy alone cannot show us that a person has a kind of value by virtue of being a person. We need an emotion—specifically love—to reveal this value. See Stein, *Empathy*, page 102 and Antonio Calcagno, *Lived Experience from the Inside Out: Social and Political Philosophy in Edith Stein* (Duquesne University Press, 2014), pages 101-102, for commentary.

[32] Stein, *Empathy,* page 85, emphasizes that empathy is a fallible source of knowledge.

[33] MacIntyre, *Edith Stein*, page 86, notes that empathy enables us to understand what someone feels and what they value.

emotion does not fit its object, that the emotion is incorrect in the sense elicited by Franz Brentano, *The Origin of Our Knowledge of Right and Wrong*, (Oxon: Routledge Publishing, 1969), pages 20-22 (henceforth, "*Origin*"). Incorrect emotions are like faulty perceptions, and when I know them to be faulty, I disavow what they represent. In such cases, I might not take the evaluations that my emotions present to me as *my* evaluations.

Similarly, the person whose emotions I represent in empathy might not take the values her emotions represent to her as her own values. Fortunately, further empathetic acts can help me see whether the values her emotions represent are taken by her as values. Additionally, I can see her body and how it moves via a capacity for ordinary perception that Stein, *Empathy*, pages 5, 86-87 calls "outer sense", and these perceptions can also supplement or correct the judgments I provisionally arrived at via empathy.

5. Understanding Historical Objects

In section 3, I mentioned three kinds of linguistic entities that we can understand: sentences, paragraphs, and whole papers. These entities are respectively analogous to complexes of emotions and expressions, motivated sequences of intentional states some of which terminate in action, and whole personalities. Each of these entities are ones that we can understand in Stein's sense—and that we can understand them is crucial to Stein's account of understanding in history. On Stein's account of understanding, what one understands are unified wholes—and so each of these things must be unified wholes. We will take them in turn.

5.1 Emotions and their Expressions

According to Stein, emotions present things as having various kinds of value or disvalue.[34] When I feel fear, I see something as being fearsome; when I love someone, I see them as being loveable. An emotion is a perception of a value, but it is not a static representation like a disinterested glance at some grass in the yard.[35] Instead, Stein, *Empathy,* page 51, says that a feeling is "loaded with an energy that must be unloaded".[36] It is unloaded by way of *expressions*. Here are some examples of the kind of thing Stein has in mind by "expression": "I blush for shame, I irately clench my fist, I angrily furrow my brow, I groan with pain, I am jubilant with joy." An expression is not simply an effect of an internal process by which an outsider can infer the nature of that process. Stein, *Empathy*, page 83, notes that the relation between shame and blushing is different than the relation between exertion and blushing. In both cases, there is a mind-body connection, but only in the former is there an expression.

Moreover, Stein seems to think of the expression of an emotion as not properly regarded as distinct from the emotion itself, but rather as something like its completion. Stein, *Empathy*,

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[34] According to Stein, *Empathy*, pages 7 and 92, valuing is a way of having value primordially given. See Borden, *Edith Stein*, page 39, Sarah Borden, *Thine Own Self. Individuality in Edith Stein's Later Writings,* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), page 10, Ingrid Vendrell Ferran, "Intentionality, Value Disclosure, and Constitution: Stein's Model", in *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood: Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, edited by Elisa Magri and Dermot Moran (New York: Springer Publishing, 2017), pages 74-76, Lebech, *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, pages 29-36, Szanto and Moran "SEP", section 2.2 for commentary, and see Sarah Borden "Values, Emotions, and Edith Stein", in *Listening to Edith Stein: Wisdom for a New Century, a Collection of Essays*, edited by Kathleen Haney, Kathleen (Washington DC, ICS Publications, 2018) for a defense of this view.

[35] As an anonymous referee has pointed out to me, there is an important alternative view that was advocated by many phenomenologists in Stein's circle, namely, that emptions are responses to value-feelings, where the latter are perceptions of value. In *Empathy,* though Stein is aware of this alleged alternative, she sets it aside, but seems to reconsider it later in her thinking. See Stein, *Empathy*, pages 98-99. For important commentary, see Alexis Delamare, "The Development of Emotional Responsivism in the Munich-Göttingen Circle", *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy,* volume 22, 2024, pages 158-175, and Ingrid Vendrell Ferran, "Value-Feeling and Emotional Response: Origins and strengths of the alternative to the perceptual model", *The New Year Book for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy,* volume 19, 2022, pages 151-173; pages 172-173 of the former and page 164 of the latter are especially relevant.

[36] See also Sawicki, *Body,* page 132, and Lebech, *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, pages 52-53.

page 51 writes, "Feeling in its pure essence is not something complete in itself." Shortly after, Stein, *Empathy,* page 59/53, says that "feelings by their nature demand expression" and that "between feeling and expressions lies an essence and a meaning, not a causal relation".[37] And much later, Stein, *Empathy*, page 76-77, writes, "The sad countenance is not actually a theme that leads over to another one at all, but is at one with sadness. This occurs in such a way that the countenance itself can step entirely into the background. The countenance is the outside of sadness. Together they form a natural unity."[38] This natural unity—this whole—is something I can understand; Stein, *Empathy*, page 84 writes, "And experience and expression form an intelligible whole in the same sense. I understand an expression, while I can merely bring a sensation to givenness."

Stein's remarks are intriguing and suggestive, but because they are not fully developed, one wants analogies to aid one's understanding of them. Here, the analogy with sentences is fruitful. Certain linguistic expressions are "incomplete". Consider a predicate like "is red". The meaning of "is red" is such that "is red" must be complemented by another expression in order to serve its telos, which is to be a part of a larger expression that expresses a complete proposition or thought. "The ball" and "is red" can form a natural unity—a unity that "is red" and "is blue" cannot form. "is red is blue" is a mere sequence of words, rather than an expression. Given what "is red" and "is blue" mean, it is both necessary and a priori that these linguistic expressions cannot form a larger linguistic expression. What grounds this necessary is that the meanings of these expressions cannot form a further meaning.

[37] "Zwischen Gefühl und Ausdruck besteht ein Wesens und Sinn, kein Kausalzusammenhang."
[38] See also MacIntyre, *Edith Stein*, page 84.

Similarly, Stein holds that there is something like an a priori grammar governing emotions and potential expressions of them. Stein, *Empathy,* pages 107-108/96-97, writes:

> A feeling, by way of its meaning, motivates an expression, and this meaning delimits a range of possible expressions, just like the meaning of a part of sentence delimits its possible (formal and material) complements. That says nothing other than that spiritual acts are governed by general rational laws. Just as there are rational laws for thinking, there are rational laws for feeling, willing, and acting that are expressed in *a priori* sciences. Along with logic, there are axiology, ethics, and Practice.[39]

There's a lot to unpack in this quote. Although it's plausible that there is something like an a priori grammar for feeling and expression, and that there are a priori rational laws for feeing, willing, and conduct, the latter neither are among the former nor follow from the former.[40] At most, the latter presuppose the former. To see this, let's further pursue the analogy with linguistic expressions. This analogy would have seemed fruitful to Stein in light of the fourth of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, which concerned, among other the things, the relations of dependent and independent meanings and the a priori principles by which these meanings can form unities. Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II*, page 61, writes,

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[39] "Ein Gefühl motiviert seinem Sinne- nach einen Ausdruck, und dieser Sinn grenzt einen Bereich vofi Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten ab, sowie der Sinn eines Satzteiles die möglichen Ergänzungen (formal und material) vörzeichnet. Das gesagt nichts anderes, als daß die geistigen: Akte einer allgemeinen Vernunftgesetzlichet unterstehen. So wie für das Denken, so gibt es auch für das Fühlen, Wollen: und Handeln Vernunftgesetze, die in apriorischen Wissenschaften ihren Ausdruck finden: neben Logik treten Axiologie, Ethik und Praktik. Diese Vernunftgesetzlichkeit ist von Wesensgesetzlichkeit zu unterscheiden."

[40] It is not clear whether Stein conflates them; her discussion is rather compressed.

> If we relate the distinction between independent and non-independent meanings to the more general distinction between independent and non-independent objects, we are really covering one of the most fundamental facts in the realm of meaning: *that meanings are subject to* a priori *laws regulating their combination into new meanings.* To each case of non-independent meaning, a law of essence applies - following the principle discussed by us in relation to all non-independent objects whatever - a law regulating the meaning's need of completion by further meanings, and so pointing to the forms and kinds of context into which it must be fitted.

And later, Husserl (page 71) continues:

> The *a priori* laws pertinent to the constitution of the essential forms of meaning, leave quite open whether meanings built on such forms have objects or not, or whether (when they are propositional forms) they yield possible truth or not. As said above, these laws have the mere function of separating sense from nonsense. The word 'nonsense' - let us stress it again- must be understood in its literal, strict sense. A heap of words like 'King but or like and' cannot be understood as a unit: each word has sense in isolation, but the compound is senseless. These laws of sense, or, normatively put, laws of the avoidance of nonsense, *direct logic to the abstractly possible forms of meaning, whose objective value it then becomes its first task to determine.* This logic does by setting up the *wholly different* laws

which distinguish a formally consistent from a formally inconsistent, i.e. absurd, sense.

Some meanings can form unities, and others cannot—and in this case, the relevant unity appears to be the entire proposition. Similarly, Stein thinks that some emotions and expressions can form unities, while others cannot. Consider someone who feels love and anger at the same time, and who expresses that anger. The anger and its expression form a unity, but the love and the expression of anger don't—the angry expression is not also an expression of love. This example suggests an abstract general a priori "grammatical" principle that is plausibly the sort of thing that Stein has in mind: if F1 and F2 are different feelings, and E1 is an expression of a feeling of type F1 but not of the type of F2, then F1 and E1 can form a unity, but F2 and E1 cannot.[41] This principle might underwrite our intuitions of incongruence with respect to other cases. Consider this example: you are terrified and your terror causes you to giggle. We don't think of the giggle as an expression of terror; rather, it is merely an effect of the terror, an odd reaction to it. The giggle and the terror do not form an understandable whole.

This "grammatical" principle is not, however, an axiological principle. Rather, it is a topic-specific *mereological* principle that tells us when wholes of a certain kind exist, rather than evaluates them in some way.[42] And in this respect, it is analogous to the a priori grammatical principles discussed by Husserl in the Fourth Investigation: these principles tell us when complex meanings, including whole propositions, exist, but they do not "evaluate" them. The

[41] See also Stein, *Einführung*, page 122/349.
[42] Mereology is the study of parts and wholes; it is the theme of investigation three of Hussel's third logical investigation, appearing in volume II of the *Logical Investigations*.

science of logic has the job of "evaluating" propositions, that is, assessing whether a proposition is contradictory, tautologous, or contingent. Similarly, the grammatical principle that implies that hatred and its expression form a unity does not tell us whether this unity is good or bad. It tells us only that this unity is available to be classified as good or bad by an axiological principle.

Stein, *Empathy*, page 103, does defend genuinely axiological claims, and proposes several "laws of value and valuing", such as "To value a positive value positively is less valuable than the positive value itself", "To value a negative value positively is less valuable than the negative value itself", "To prefer the positive valuing over the positive value is thus axiologically unreasonable", and "To put the unjustified positive value behind the negative value is axiologically reasonable." A detailed examination of these formal axiological principles (as well as the other material axiological principles she considers) would take us too far afield. What is germane is a further analogy between the grammatical principles considered by Husserl and Stein respectively and the corresponding logical and axiological principles.

This further analogy is that in both cases violating them leads to a kind of unintelligibility. If someone says to me "is red is blue", I will be puzzled, to say the least. Not only is this sequence unintelligible in virtue of being meaningless, his production of this sequence is unintelligible. (The explanation I'd consider for why he produced that sequence of words would be that he did it to make a philosophical point!) Similarly, we do not understand the giggle caused by terror, since they do not form a meaningful whole.

Suppose a friend asserts to me a flat-footed contradiction, e.g., "that ball is round and not round". I won't take her assertion at face value; instead, I will be perplexed, and grope for an explanation of why she said something so goofy, so unreasonable. And if that friend has an

intrinsic preference for something of lesser intrinsic value over something of greater intrinsic value, I will also be perplexed, since the preference also is unreasonable. We understand when people produce meaningful wholes that are consonant with principles of reasonability, but we struggle to when their behavior deviates from this.[43] When confronted with deviant cases, we tend to think, "this behavior doesn't make sense".[44] We'll return to this idea in a bit.

5.2 Motivated Sequences of Intentional States that Terminate in Action

Consider this sequence of intentional states that terminates in an action: I want something to drink, and I believe that this cup in front of me contains something to drink. On the basis of this belief and desire, I form a plan to pick up the cup and drink it. I then will that this plan be executed, and my body complies, that is, I drink from the liquid in the cup. Informally speaking, this sequence collectively *makes sense*. Less informally, corresponding to this sequence of intentional states is a sequence consisting of the meanings of each of these intentional states—and this sequence of meanings is itself a coherent whole. This sequence of intentional states is like a well-executed paragraph.

Contrast that sequence with this sequence: I want something to drink, and I believe that this cup in front of me belonged to my grandmother. On the basis of this belief and desire, I form a plan to read a newspaper. I then will that I scratch my ear, and my body complies, and I scratch my ear. This sequence of intentional states is akin to a random list of sentences. Just as the latter

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[43] Compare with Mette Lebech, Matte. 2009. *On the Problem of Human Dignity: a Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation* (Würzburg: Koeningshausen&Nueman, 2009), pages 268-269. (Henceforth, "*The Problem"*.)

[44] Compare with MacIntyre, *Edith Stein,* page 85, who notes that understanding is possible because we know that human acts occur in rule-governed sequences, and Lebech. *The Philosophy of Edith Stein*, page 53, who claims that understanding in the cultural world is possible by virtue of understanding motivation.

doesn't add up to a genuine paragraph, the former doesn't form a unified whole. The sequence is not understandable because there is no whole whose parts "meaningfully hang together".

As with emotions and their expressions, a systematic development of this idea will distinguish the mereological principles concerning when a sequence of intentional states constitutes a whole from principles of rationality or ethics concerning when a sequence of intentional states is rational or ethical.

In rough outline, a necessary condition for a collection of intentional states to compose a whole is that their respective meanings form a coherent whole as well, but it would take much work—and space—to develop this into fully-fledged theory. But note that such a theory will be a priori in Husserl's sense, because any sequence of intentional states relevantly like the sequence mentioned in the beginning of the paragraph will compose an intelligible whole. Moreover, we can use the method of *eidetic variation* to elicit the common essence.[45] For example, we can vary the respective contents in the first example, such as in this sequence: I want something to eat, and I believe that this sandwich in front of me is edible. On the basis of this belief and desire, I form a plan to pick up the sandwich and eat it. I then will that this plan be executed, and my body complies, i.e., I eat the sandwich. What is common to both sequences is this structure: A subject S wants that P; S believes that Q is a way to make P true; S plans to bring about Q; S acts so to bring about Q in order to make P true. All sequences that are instances of this structure form intelligible wholes. A fully developed mereological theory for sequences of intentional states will contain principles even more general than this one.

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[45] Eidetic variation is the phenomenological technique of contemplating an object as systematically undergoing a change of features in order to determine which of these features are essential to the object. See, for example, section 87 of Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgement*, translated by J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (Routledge, 1973).

5.3 Personalities

Let us turn to the third understandable whole: personalities. A coherent personality is in this respect like a well-written paper: it has a cohesive narrative.[46] In Stein's ontology, personalities correspond to certain kinds of *person types*. And on Stein's view, many of the a priori foundational propositions of history are about person types. In this section, we will address the following questions: how are personalities intuited? What are person types and how are they individuated? How are person types intuited? And, finally, since merely intuiting a personality or a person type is not sufficient for understanding them, how are they understood?

Stein, Empathy, page 86, thinks that people have stable personalities over time, and that these personalities can be the objects of empathetic perception.[47] But if so, then empathetic perception must be able to represent a personality as a unified object that persists over time. So how does it do this? In Stein's (1989: 37) words, the problem of empathy must be treated as "a problem of constitution". "Constitution" was a technical term introduced by Husserl and adopted by Stein, and corresponding to the abstract noun phrase is the more important expression "to constitute objects in consciousness", which indicates an important object-directed mental

[46] This claim doesn't by itself imply a so-called narrative theory of the self of the sort defended by (for example) Michael Rea, "The Metaphysics of the Narrative Self", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 8 (2022), pages 586-603.

[47] See also Stein (2004a: 169-170), which explicitly states that we can perceive whole character traits. Note that Stein posits that each person has a *personal core* that explains the stability of a person's character traits across time, and even across possible worlds. See Stein's (*Empathy*, page 110) discussion of various possible situations involving Julius Caesar; see Borden, *Edith Stein*, pages 36-37, and Borden *Thine Own Self*, pages 6, 10-11, and 27-29 for further discussion. See also Stein, *Empathy*, pages 43, 86. See also Antonio Calcagno "Rethinking Challenges to Concepts of Personhood: Roberto Esposito and Edith Stein", in *Edith Stein's Itinerary: Phenomenology, Christian Philosophy, and Carmelite Spirituality*, edited by Harm Klueting and Edeltraud Klueting (Aschendorff Verlag, 2021), page 267, who claims that a person and her character "confront us", and Sawicki, *Body*, page 115, who notes that Stein holds that a person's soul has "categorical elements" that seem to be something like character traits. I think it is better to say that the soul's categorical elements are the *grounds* of those traits—a trait is a disposition, and dispositions have categorical grounds; similarly, van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity,* pages 120-123 seems to take the core of the person to be the ground of character traits.

activity we almost always engage in.[48] But to say that an object is constituted in consciousness is not to say that conscious activity creates that object. I can constitute a rock in consciousness, but my doing so is not in anyway a part of the ground of the existence of the rock.[49] Rather, I "constitute" an object when I represent that object as a unified thing.[50]

Part of the explanation for how constitution is possible is that perceptions consist of sensory data and a meaning: the sensory data account for the how the perception feels and the meaning accounts for what the perception is a perception of, that is, what the perception refers to.[51] Suppose that you are standing in front of a building. Consider the difference between the perception of the front a building and a perception of the building. Although both perceptions feel the same—they consist of the same sort of sensory data—they do not have the same meaning component. The latter perception is a representation of the building as a unified thing, that is, as a thing made of parts, only some of which are in front of me, and that persists over time.[52] Your perception of the building "constitutes" the building in this technical sense.

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[48] For example, this seems to be how *Husserl, Logical Investigations vol. II*: 126) is using "constitution".

[49] Edith Stein, *Letters to Roman Ingarden,* translated by Hugh Hunt (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 2014), pages 39-40, 254 explicitly rejects an idealist interpretation of constitution.

[50] Compare with Lebech, *The Problem*, pages 228-230, as well as Lebech *The Philosophy of Edith Stein,* pages xi-xii, 10-11, and 19. Calcagno, "Rethinking Challenges", pages 269-270), notes that persons are given to us as unities. *Sawicki, Body,* page 113, claims that it is misleading to say that there is a problem of constitution here, because empathy is a different (and perhaps more fundamental) way of representing unities than constitution; see also Sarah Borden Sharkey, "Reconciling Time and Eternity: Edith Stein's Philosophical Project", in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, edited by Mette Lebech and John Gurmin (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), page 11. I think Sawicki's claim is misguided, since constitution is not a specific kind of unity-representing mental act, and empathy another, but instead any act that represents a unity is a constituting act. "Constituting act" denotes a genus of which empathy is a species rather than a competitor; this is also the view of Lebech, "On the Problem", page 242, footnote 426.

[51] See *Husserl, Logical Investigations vol. I*, pages 213-215 and Stein, *Einführung*, pages 68 and 179-180. The sensory component of a perception is sometimes called by Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II*, page 165, "representative content"; later, Husserl, in his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First book*, translated by F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishing, 1982), page 205, uses the term "hyletic data". See McDaniel, "Edith Stein", pages 210-213, for a discussion of Stein.

[52] Note that I do not say that in such cases, one sees the building in virtue of seeing a part of the building. For it might be that one does not even have a perception of a part of the building, but rather one's sole perception is of the

So, when Stein says that empathy must be treated "as a problem of constitution", the fundamental question she raises is this: how are we able to represent other people and their personalities as unified objects?

I will discuss a relevant aspect of this question. Objects, their particular attributes, such as a person and her personality, and perceptual acts, all persist over time. For example, suppose I sit motionless and stare at a wall for thirty seconds. It's plausible that there is a perceptual act that persists for exactly those thirty seconds. Despite the short lifespan of this perception, it's still a perception of the wall, which is an object that continues to exist even when this perception does not. Stein thinks that we can intuit personalities via empathy.[53] But can a personality be intuited via a relatively short empathetic act e.g., one that lasts for about as long as the typical empathetic act of seeing that someone is sad?

Perhaps a whole personality can be presented in short-lived act of empathy, even though it isn't presented wholly.[54] This is precisely what Stein, *Einführung,* pages 169-170, asserts—a whole character can be given in an empathetic perception even though not every part of that character is explicitly given in that perception. Given that empathy is a form of perception, this is a plausible assertion. Let's return to your perception of a building. Suppose that this perception is short-lived. You still see the building itself despite not seeing all the parts of the building the perception of that building. Remember, a perception consists of sensory data and a

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whole building. This is possible because, again, a perception is not simply a bundle of sensory data, but rather is also informed by a meaning.

[53] See Stein, *Empathy*, page 43, as well as Sawicki, *Body,* page 115.

[54] Stein, *Einführung,* pages 169-170, writes, "Sodann ist jede Wahrnehmung einer Eigenschaft Wahrnehmung des gesamten Charakters, wobei nur ein Teilbestand durch eigentliche Bekundung gegeben, der andere dagegen nur - mehr oder minder bestimmt – mitgegeben ist, ohne sich selbst zu bekunden. Spätere Bekundung kann das Mitgegebene zu eigentlicher Gegebenheit bringen, kann aber auch andere als die in der ursprünglichen Setzung beschlossenen Eigenschaften erscheinen lassen und zu einer Umbestimmung führen oder eventuell zu einer Aufhebung, wenn die verschiedenen Eigenschaften sich in der Einheit eines Charakters nicht vertragen."

meaning that unifies that sensory data and makes it the case that the data can refer to an object. So, a momentary perception can nonetheless be a perception of a persisting object that lasts far longer than the perception, provided that the sense of that momentary perception directs it to a longer-lived object. Similarly, an empathetic perception of a personality trait might have the same sensory content as an empathetic perception of an emotion that is the manifestation of that personality trait. The difference between these two empathetic acts would be a difference in their meaning.

Here's an example to illustrate this idea. Suppose that Donny is prone to outbursts, especially when he interacts with a woman who makes him feel inferior. Suppose you observe a particular outburst occurring. Now, consider the difference between seeing Donny as angry and seeing Donny as misogynistic. In the former case, you have a perception of a particular emotional episode, which might or might not be a part of a larger pattern. In the latter case, you have an insight into the pattern itself, namely an unfortunately stable character trait of Donny: misogyny is a part of Donny's personality.

With respect to both ordinary perception and empathetic perception, when our perceptual representation is a representation of a spatiotemporal whole, there are always further representations to be had of that same whole that supplement or potentially correct the original perception. Suppose I have a perception of a building while facing the front of the building. I then slowly walk around the building while looking at it the whole time. I have a series of perceptions of the building that contain different sense-data, but each of them has a meaning that makes each collection of sense-data refer to the same building. This sequence of perceptions

gives me a "fuller picture" of the building than merely one perception of it.[55] Because you have this "fuller picture", you know more about the building. These perceptions give more information about the building because each is a perception *of* the building. Similarly, you might have multiple empathetic perceptions of Donny's misogyny over time, occasioned by your observations of frequent manifestations of it. And these empathetic perceptions will give you a "fuller picture" of what it is like. You will have more information about Donny's misogyny, which might include things like its stimulus or trigger conditions, or the range of feelings that it manifests, or the intensity of those manifested feelings. These empathetic perceptions give more information about Donny's misogyny because each of them is an empathetic perception of that misogyny. And note that as you acquire this information, your understanding of Donny's misogyny also grows: you now can experience how the various parts of Donny's misogyny hang together. A single intuition might not be sufficient for understanding a personality, but a sequence of them provides the materials for understanding.

Stein, *Empathy*, page 96, claims that empathy grounds the possibility of further perceptions: just as intuitions of types of ordinary objects can be founded on perceptions of ordinary objects, intuitions of person types can be founded on empathetic perceptions.[56] Stein, *Empathy*, page 108, clarifies the notion of a person type by appeal to the idea of an "ideal" person:

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[55] The informal phrase "fuller picture" was deliberately picked to invoke the phenomenological idea of a fulfillment of one perception by another. See McDaniel, "Edith Stein", pages 213-217, for a discussion of Stein's views on fulfillment.

[56] On person types, see *Sawicki, Body,* pages 132 and 184), Borden, *Edith Stein*, pages 36-40, Borden, *Thine Own Self*, pages 178-184), Elizabeth Meade, "Stein and Levinas on the Other", in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, edited by Mette Lebech and John Gurmin (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), page 177, footnote 10, and van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity,* pages 118-119.

> The ideal person with all his values in a suitable hierarchy and having adequate feelings would correspond to the entire realm of value levels. Other personal types would result from the abolition of certain value ranges or from the modification of the value hierarchy and, further, from differences in the intensity of value experiences or from preferring one of the several forms of expression, such as bodily expression, willing, action, etc. Perhaps the formulation of a doctrine of types would provide the ontological foundation of the cultural sciences intended by Dilthey's efforts.

Key to this idea of an ideal person is the claim that feelings can be adequate or inadequate to their objects; this deontic claim was a hallmark of phenomenological ethics, and has its proximate origin in Brentano, *Origin*, who argued that emotions can be experienced as correct or incorrect. For example, the preference for the suffering of an innocent child over that child's receiving a simple pleasure is incorrect. Stein, *Empathy*, pages 101-106, distinguishes various respects in which an emotion might be adequate or inadequate (to various degrees) to its object, but clarifying these respects is a paper of its own, and won't detain us here.[57] Suffice it to say that Stein's ideal person is one whose emotions are always fully adequate to their objects. Moreover, Stein's ideal person is one who has the requisite emotions when a given situation calls for them.[58]

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[57] I hope to address this in future work.

[58] As many have noted, Stein is a realist about value. See Borden, *Edith Stein,* page 39, Sarah Borden, "Values, Emotions, and Edith Stein", in *Listening to Edith Stein: Wisdom for a New Century, a Collection of Essays*, edited by Kathleen Haney (Washington DC: ICS Publications), page 90, Vendrell Ferran, "Intentionality", Paulina Fuentes, "Ontology and Relational Ethics in Edith Stein's Thought", in *Ethics and Metaphysics in the Philosophy of Edith Stein: Applications and Implications,* edited by Michael Andrews and Antonio Calcagno (New York: Springer, 2022), pages 204, Lebech, *The Philosophy of Edith Stein,* pages 36-38, William Tullius, "Person in Community, Repentance, and Historical Meaning: from an Individual to a Social Ethics in Stein's Early Phenomenological Treatises", in Andrews and Calcagno (2022), pages 75-76, and van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity*, pages 140-141.

As she states in the quoted material above, other personality types are in effect deviations from this ideal. Some person types are in this sense maximally specific: they are types of personalities that ground dispositions directed towards all kinds of value. But person types can also be less specific.[59] Here is an example: two people can otherwise be very different and yet share an appreciation for beautiful art; they, and others like them in that respect, belong to a less specific type of person, *an art appreciator.*[60] Similarly, and sadly, *a misogynist* is a type of person.

Sawicki, *Body*, pages 132 and 184, notes that Stein borrows the term "personal types" from Dilthey.[61] But Stein's metaphysics of personal types is different. Dilthey's personal types are not genuine universals, but rather are particular persons that can nonetheless be thought of as "typical" in important respects.[62] For Stein, personal types are genuine universals rather than particulars. Moreover, Stein's personal types are abstract ("ideal") objects, not located in space and time. Accordingly, no personal type is numerically identical with any instance of it, and this is true of even the most specific of such types. Different person types have different essences, and each such essence comprises dispositions to value, whereas a particular person *construed* as typical could not have such an essence, since the essence of a thing is not relative to how it is construed.

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[59] See Stein, *Empathy*, page 114. See also Stein, *Einführung*, pages 51/126-127 and 131/375, where Stein says that a character is constituted by a series of dispositional properties/traits, but is something unified rather than merely "built up" out of them.

[60] Compare with Sawicki's (*Body*, page 138) example of a scientific type of person.

[61] Sawicki, *Body,* pages 6-9, and Van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity,* pages 96-97, discuss Dilthey's influence on Stein.

[62] This seems to be the interpretation of Plantinga, *Historical Understanding*, pages 112-113, who claims that, for Dilthey, a typical individual is an individual who can be recognized as "representative" of his age. See, for example, Dilthey, *Selected Works vol. III*, pages 206-207 and Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works Volume II: Understanding the Human World*, edited by Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pages 205-206.

6. Stein's Defense of History as an Irreducible Science

Recall that Stein accepts a Husserlian notion of science on which an endeavor is a science only if there are necessary a priori principles distinctive to that science. These principles "structure" the body of possible knowledge corresponding to a given science, and determine the objects studied by the science as well as the appropriate methodology for studying these objects. As noted above, Stein, *Empathy*, page 108, suggests that these person types form the ontological basis of a scientific history. Stein, *Empathy*, pages 95 and 114, claims that each historical person instantiated some person type. These previously instantiated person types still have being even if the people who instantiated them no longer do. On Stein's view, the mereological and axiological principles governing emotions and expressions, sequences of intentional actions, and personalities and person types are the foundational principles for a scientific history. The latter principles were alluded to in the previous section: the transition from an emotion to an expression of it is reasonable, and hence intelligible to an outside observer, whereas the transition from an emotion to an outward behavior that is not an expression of it is not intelligible in this way. Similarly, behavior that stems from axiological reasonable preferences and desires is intelligible behavior to an extent that other behavior might not be.

Historically realized emotions and their expressions, sequences of intentional states that terminate in action, and personalities and person types more generally, are the objects studied by history, and are available to be understood. A successful historical endeavor is one in which we understand why people did what they did. Note that understanding is not the same as lauding or excusing. Suppose my historical investigation uncovers an event in which Donny angrily punched a wall. Although I have never punched a wall, I understand why Donny did this,

because I can *envision* how angry he is, and I can understand the angriness motivating the expression of this anger, in this case the punch. I know from my own experience with anger that anger has an energy that demands to be expressed. Because I know these things, I know not only what happened—Donny punched a wall—but I also understand why it happened. The anger and its expression form an intelligible unity, even if neither this emotion nor its expression is morally acceptable.

What is the relation between a science of history so conceived and a scientific psychology? Stein, Empathy, pages 94-95, conceives of psychology as a natural rather than cultural science, albeit one that does not reduce to the physical sciences.[63] Stein, Empathy, pages 1 and 21-22, accepts, as Husserl did before her, Brentano's division of psychology into descriptive and genetic psychology, the former of which has the job of classifying types of mental states by way of their essential features, while the latter has the job of causally explaining the production of tokens of these states.[64] It is because psychology is in the business of giving causal explanations that it is a natural science rather than a cultural or historical science.[65]

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[63] Psychology doesn't reduce to the physical sciences because persons are not purely physical objects. Although Stein, *Empathy*, page 41 holds that we are essentially embodied creatures, she is a moderate dualist. Stein, *Empathy*, page 40 claims that we each have a soul, which is a "substantial entity" that is the bearer of a stream of consciousness. (However, there is no textual evidence that this soul is conceived of along the lines of Cartesian Dualism.) Although we are essentially embodied, Stein, *Empathy*, pages 41, grants that bodiless minds are metaphysically possible, and moreover that there are some mental states that we enjoy that could also be enjoyed by a bodiless mind; Stein, *Empathy*, pages 41-42, 50 mentions moods, feelings of pleasure and grief, and experiences of aesthetic value, as examples of such states. (See also Szanto and Moran (2020: section 2.2) for discussion.) Finally, psychology cannot be reduced to the physical sciences because intentionality cannot be reduced to the non-intentional. See Stein, Empathy, page 91. See also Baseheart, *Person in the World,* page 39 and Antonio Calcagno, *Lived Experience from the Inside Out: Social and Political Philosophy in Edith Stein* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2014), pages 92-93.

[64] See Franz Brentano, Franz. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint, 2nd edition* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[65] Stein's views on freedom might also play a role here. As noted earlier, Stein seems to reject determinism when it comes to causation by motivation. Moreover, it might be that freedom itself is another aspect of a person that can't be understood naturalistically. See, for example, Marianne Sawicki, "The Humane Community: Husserl vs. Stein", in *Husserl and Stein*, edited by Richard Feist and William Sweet (The Council for Research and Values in Philosophy, 2003), page 280, who claims that freedom simply is, rather than something that gradually evolves, and

This is an attractive account of history as a science. I will conclude this paper by assessing some important objections to it.

7. The Arguments from Evil

Here, I discuss Marianne Sawicki's two challenges to Stein's account. The first is that Stein's account has "sinister implications", i.e., is itself morally troubling. The second challenge is that Stein's theory cannot account for how we can understand historical evil deeds. My assessment is that the first challenge can be met, but that the second challenge requires that Stein's account of person types be modified. Fortunately, the modification of Stein's account is straightforward and is at least as plausible.

We begin with the first challenge. Sawicki, *Body*, page 140, writes,

> On one hand, you say that I can fully empathize the live experiences that *my type of person* has; that is, I can live along with the *similar* i as it lives through its experiences. On the other hand, with *truly alien* aliens-- people not of my own type--all I can do is to represent their experiences to myself and watch them from the outside. Objectively.
>
> Frau Doktorin, this is an offensive and dangerous idea. Besides which, it is wrong. There are no aliens so *alien* that we cannot feel insider their live experiences *at all*. We are all of one type. …. There is another sinister aspect to your theory of type. Besides impeding understanding, type is also positioned as its

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Van der Meijden, *Person and Dignity*, pages 185-186, who claims that to be a person is to be a free person. Note, however, that Stein, "Critique", page 454, does mention that person types might be useful for psychology.

> enabler. Citing Dilthey again, you propose that universal knowledge of values allows us to have a priori understanding of all possible types of persons before we even encounter any of the individuals who exemplify the types. This suggests that knowledge of type comes to us without empathy, and with it the ability to assess and classify people.[66]

There are two alleged respects in which Stein's theory is supposedly sinister: it implies that there are people with whom we cannot empathize, and it implies that knowledge of personal types can be achieved without empathy. I respond to these charges in turn.

First, as Sawicki (1997: 140, page 95) herself notes, Stein doesn't assert that there are people with whom we cannot empathize, and even says that we can empathize with non-human animals, as I do when I see that a dog is in pain.[67] Stein accepts that, in principle, for each person, I can see that she is a person, and with respect to at least one of her internal states, I can see that she has that state.[68] Recall that person types can be more or less general: the most general type is one that all people belong to.[69]

Moreover, pace Sawicki, Stein is right that there might be some person types that have instances whose experiences I cannot *fully* empathize with because I am not acquainted with some of the values that persons of this type respond to. (Recall that, roughly, person types are individuated by how their instances respond to various values.) Suppose that my life has been sheltered and pleasant, and so I have never experienced sadness, grief, unhappiness, etc.

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[66] In this portion of the book, Sawicki addresses Stein in the second-person rather than write about her using her last name.
[67] See Stein, *Empathy*, page 59.
[68] Compare with Borden, *Thine Own Self*, page 182-183. Gallagher, "Dilthey and Empathy", page 153, notes that, for Stein, anything with a living body is a potential object of an empathetic perception.
[69] See Stein, *Empathy*, pages 114-115.

Plausibly, I'm currently incapable of seeing someone as sad. Even when I see that a particular person is undergoing some sort of process that motivates crying or self-hugging, I do not thereby see her as sad. My lack of emotional experience prevents me from currently *fully* emphasizing with the type of person who does feel sadness.[70] For a less fanciful example, consider a young child who can see that his parents love one another, but cannot see that they are *in love*, that is, *romantically* love each other, because the child has not yet experienced romantic love. This child can see his parents as persons but cannot *fully* empathize with their experiences.

It's not implausible that some people are such that there is at least one kind of genuinely valuable object that they are not acquainted with.[71] Each kind of genuinely valuable object that a person is not acquainted with corresponds with a class of person types, each of which is partially individuated by how the members of those types respond to that kind of valuable object. A person not acquainted with that kind of valuable object cannot fully empathize with the experiences of the persons who are members of person types belonging to this corresponding class.[72]

Because emotions are perceptions of value, it is unsurprising that our lack of acquaintance with certain values inhibits our ability to fully empathize with one who has

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[70] Stein, *Empathy*, pages 115-116, gives an example of a shallow person who cannot emphasize fully with the experiences of someone who has a deeper set of values. See also Meade, "Stein and Levinas", pages 174-175.Stein, *Empathy,* page 115, also notes that a secular person might not be able to fully emphasize with the experiences of the religious person; see Michele Petersen, Michele, "Love Divined: Discerning a Contemplative Ethic in the Philosophy of Edith Stein", in *Ethics and Metaphysics in the Philosophy of Edith Stein: Applications and Implications*, edited by Michael Andrews and Antonio Calcagno (New York: Springer, 2022), page 29 for comments on this passage.

[71] Lebech, *The Philosophy of Edith Stein,* page 39, suggests that Stein thinks that there are innumerably many valuable things, that there will not be a day when we "run out" of values.

[72] For additional thoughts on Sawicki's objection, see Borden, *Thine Own Self*, pages 153-164 and Christof Betschart, "The Individuality of the Human Person in the Phenomenological Works of Edith Stein", in *Edith Stein: Women, Social-Political Philosophy, Theology, Metaphysics, and Public History: New Approaches and Applications,* edited by Antonio Calcagno (New York: Springer Publishing 2016).

acquaintance with them, because in general, a lack of perceptual acquaintance with a phenomenon often inhibits empathetic perception of someone else experiencing that phenomenon. Here is an example involving what Stein, Empathy, page 58, calls "sensuous empathy", which is how we represent other beings as perceiving beings. Suppose I observe a person running her fingers across a rough wool jacket. I see her as experiencing the sensation of scratchiness. But I can see her as experiencing this sensation only because I myself can and have experienced tactile sensations like scratchiness. Had I lacked a sense of touch myself, I would have lacked the ability to see others as having these tactile experiences.[73]

Although one's unfamiliarity with values that others are acquainted with could lead one to behave poorly, it also provides an opportunity for the exercise of the virtues of humility, curiosity, and emotional and intellectual openness. This aspect of Stein's theory is not inherently sinister.

The second aspect of Sawicki's, *Body,* page 140, criticism is that "knowledge of type comes to us without empathy, and with it the ability to assess and classify people." This criticism is also unsuccessful. Even if I could be acquainted with all of the person types a priori—perhaps by contemplation of the entirety of the variety of possible ways to respond to what is valuable—it would not follow that I could a priori classify or assess particular people as following under these types. In order to classify a particular person as belonging to a type, I need to know what she values. To know what she values, I need empirical evidence. The most reliable way to learn what a person values is via empathy, though I could learn about her values from testimony, or by

[73] Compare with Stein, *Empathy*, page 62, who notes that blindness can inhibit empathy; see also Gloria Postigo "Phenomenological Ontology: Stein's Third Way", in *Intersubjectivity, Humanity, Being: Edith Stein's Phenomenology and Christian Philosophy*, edited by Mette Lebech and John Gurmin (Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 2015), page 156, for commentary.

inference to the best explanation of her behavior. But a priori subsumption of a particular person under a type is not possible.

I have argued that Sawicki's criticisms of the "sinister" aspects of Stein's theory do not succeed. But Sawicki also objects that Stein's theory of personal types cannot make sense of the sinister behavior of other people. Sawicki, *Body*, pages 142-143 states that:

> On one hand, you expect the human intellect to be the guiding force of human history and the intelligible component within it. On the other, you expect that events will not always occur *intelligently*. Yet they always will be *intelligible,* for the mindless components of history will be explainable through attribution to causal processes as understood in the natural sciences. In other words, there will be evil, but it will be owing to natural events such as floods and earthquakes. There is no room in this theory for evil human purposes, and no way to understand them.

Given how Stein characterizes person types, this criticism has some bite. Recall that Stein, *Empathy*, page 108, offers a characterization of a person type in terms of ways of deviating from an ideal person type: other types either do not recognize some of the values recognized by the ideal type, or rank their importance differently, or have differences in the intensities in which they experience them, or prefer different ways of expressing values. It's hard to see how to derive an evil person type—as opposed to merely a less good person type—by deletion or modification of the ideal person type, at least given the sorts of modifications that Stein explicitly mentions. Is a genuinely evil person simply someone who rank orders what is good differently, or loves what is good less intensely than what is ideal, or fails to respond at all to what is good, or prefers to express his positive evaluations of what is good in atypical ways?

So, if Stein's account of what makes an action in intelligible requires subsuming the actor under a person type, Stein's theory doesn't initially seem consistent with intelligible yet evil actions.[74]

But let's not overstate this criticism. Perhaps one way to be evil is to overvalue something that is good and that benefits oneself to the extent that one sacrifices far greater goods for other people. If so, this way of being evil is derivable via modification of the ideal person type: it is a difference in the ordering of values. And if so, Stein's theory does not imply that *all* evil acts are unintelligible. But Stein's theory is still false if there are *some* intelligible evil actions whose intelligibility is denied by her theory. We should assess whether it has this weaker but still problematic implication, or how to modify it into a theory that does not.

For each thing such that loving it for its own sake is a fitting response, the ideal person loves that thing. Now consider an individual who hates rather than loves those things, and acts accordingly. This individual might be evil in virtue of hating what should be loved, but this evil personality type that she exemplifies doesn't seem derivable from an ideal personality type in the way that Stein envisions. However, the evil behavior she does seems intelligible, at least to some extent. I say "to some extent" because we often do react to seriously evil behavior as though it is unintelligible; sometimes we ask, "how *could* he do something so awful?", which indicates that we are hitting something like a barrier to full understanding. But since the behavior is understandable to some extent, Stein's theory needs to be modified to account for this.

[74] Though it's not clear that Stein's account actually requires this: a properly motivated sequence of intentional acts that terminate in an action has a kind of internal intelligibility independently of whether that sequence is a product of a stable personality trait. So it might be that even if her unmodified account implied that evil character traits or evil people are unintelligible, it would not follow that the account implies that evil actions are unintelligible. I won't pursue this line of thought further since there is a straightforward modification to Stein's original account that wholly undercuts the problem.

Fortunately, there is a straightforward way for Stein to modify her theory to respond to this criticism. First, we make explicit the idea of a *value illusion*, which is already implicit in her theory.[75] Recall that, for Stein, emotions are perceptions of value. This includes wanting and preferring: when I want something, I see it as valuable; when I prefer one thing over another, I see it as preferable.[76] Suppose that x is intrinsically preferable to y. Then the ideal person will intrinsically prefer x to y because the ideal person's rank ordering matches the objective facts about the rank ordering defined on genuine values. But some person types differ from the ideal types by rank ordering values differently, which seems to imply that members of some of these person types are preferring the less valuable over the more—and so are *seeing* the less valuable as more valuable. Since they are seeing values incorrectly, they are suffering from a value illusion. Relatedly, a person who desires something with an intensity greater than what is warranted sees the thing as far more desirable than it actually is.

The natural thought is this. Person types are to be individuated by how they dispose one to perceive or misperceive things having value. The ideal person has a kind of omniscience with respect to values. She sees all things of value and has fitting emotional responses to them, and ranks them as they should be ordered, and feels with the intensity that they call for. Other person types are defined both in terms of the values they are disposed to perceive correctly and those that they are disposed to fail to perceive or fail to perceive correctly.[77]

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[75] Borden, *Edith Stein,* page 28, discusses the idea of a "sham emotion" in Stein's later work.

[76] See Stein, *Empathy*, page 97.

[77] There is still Sawicki's (*Body,* page 140) question of whether "physical, psychological, or cultural differences" should also entail difference in person type, or whether such differences are to be accounted for somehow in terms of the differences in perceived or misperceived value, or in how those values are expressed. I incline towards the latter option.

Consider again sensuous empathy. I can see a person *touching* the rough side of a piece of sandpaper, and when I do this I see this person as feeling something rough. But there is also a kind of sensuous empathy in which I see another as having a misperception. Suppose we both look at the Mueller-Lyer illusion, but I am antecedently familiar with it while you are not. I look at you looking with puzzlement at the depiction, and see that you are misperceiving the lengths of the lines depicted. I *understand* your reaction because I am familiar with the experience you are having, and can see how having this misperception leads you to act in ways that make sense given that you are having a misperception.

Similarly, I can use empathy to understand how it is that a bad person can commit an evil action because I am familiar with at least some of the misperceptions they are having that lead them to act in those ways. Suppose I am in the passenger seat of the car that Fred is driving, and someone in front of Fred is driving a bit slower than the speed limit. I watch Fred become unreasonably angry. He swears while aggressively driving dangerously close to the car in front of him. Fred's actions are unreasonable and morally wrong, but they are not unintelligible—I can understand why he does what he does because I too have been angry before, and sometimes have been angry when it was not reasonable to be so.[78]

To be clear, when one acts evilly on the basis of a misperception of value, one can still be culpable for the evil that one does. One can be responsible for their own misperceptions or failures to perceive. Perhaps none are so blind as those that will not see—or feel—but their deliberate failure to see does not excuse them when they fail to act as they should.[79]

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[78] Stein, *Einführung*, pages 210 and 672-673, notes that we understand that anger towards a person motivates harming them in some way.

[79] Many of these ideas were "field tested" during my graduate seminar on the Philosophy of Edith Stein that I taught during the Spring 2024 semester at the University of Notre Dame; I thank the students for their patience. I thank

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