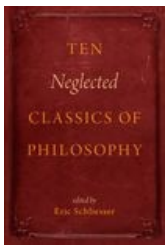

Ten Neglected Classics of Philosophy

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CHAPTER

8 Edith Stein: *On the Problem of Empathy*

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Abstract

Edith Stein, who began her career as Husserl's research assistant, was an important philosopher in the phenomenological tradition, but her work was ultimately marginalized in Nazi Germany and she died in a concentration camp. This paper unearths and discusses her first substantive work, On the Problem of Empathy, which is the problem of how other persons and their inner states can be given to others. In terms of "the problem of other minds," how we perceive those is through the irreducible intentional state of empathy. Stein wants to distinguish between the descriptive-psychological (distinguished by Husserl's ideation of intentional states) and genetic-psychological (supported by empirical analysis) aspects of this problem. Stein felt empathy was an act of ideation through which we can systematically and comprehensively discern not only others' spiritual types but our own. Empathy is a prerequisite for both knowledge of others and the self.

Keywords: Edith Stein, phenomenology, empathy, Husserl, descriptive psychology, genetic psychology, ideation

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1. Background to the Text

Edith Stein's early work belongs to the phenomenological movement, and her later work maintains that orientation but couples it with Thomistic metaphysics.[1] So given Stein's philosophical orientation it is unsurprising that most philosophers working in the so-called "analytic tradition" of philosophy are unlikely to have heard of Edith Stein. However, given the minimal discussion of her and her work among many prominent philosophers trained in the "phenomenological" wing of the so-called "Continental tradition", there is a reason to worry that her importance to the evolution of that tradition is underappreciated.[2] This is unfortunate, since
p. 196 Stein was ↳ a very good philosopher whose academic career was undeniably derailed by both sexism and anti-Semitism.[3] Despite her impressive philosophical accomplishments and her exemplary work as Husserl's first research assistant, his "letter of recommendation" for a university position at Göttingen basically said that she would be qualified if university positions were to be for women.[4] Needless to say, she did not get the job. Husserl did not acknowledge Stein's contributions to the development of his own thinking in his *Ideas II* and *Ideas III*.[5] Heidegger claimed the credit for Stein's work in editing Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time*, which required Stein to painstakingly reconstruct Husserl's train of thought from a series of disorganized and disjointed portions of papers written in shorthand.[6] Moreover, the fact that
p. 197 Edith ↳ Stein was born Jewish eliminated the possibility of an academic career in Nazi Germany.[7] In the end, she was murdered by Nazis in a concentration camp.

As Calcagno (2006, 263) notes, the majority of scholars who study Stein have focused on her biographical and religious writings, which suggests that her status as a saint of the Catholic Church has had a deleterious effect on her status as a philosopher's philosopher. I am not in a position to judge whether this fact (if it is a fact) is ironic. But it would be a further injustice to Stein if her philosophical work came to be completely neglected.[8]

In discussing Stein's first major philosophical work, *On the Problem of Empathy*, I first present some of the background context to the composition of this work and then discuss some of the themes of the work that I find intriguing. It should go without saying that I do not take myself to be an expert on Stein or on phenomenology more generally. Rather, I come to you as simply as someone who believes in the importance of not allowing the work of those who have been unfairly marginalized in our field to be completely forgotten.

The published version of *On the Problem of Empathy* that I discuss is an English translation of the bulk of Stein's doctoral thesis (Stein 1989), which was successfully defended in 1916 and published for the most part in its
p. 198 entirety in German in 1917. A lengthy historical overview of the background to the problem of empathy is ↳ omitted in the published version. It is my understanding that this portion is now lost.[9] In what follows, all unaccompanied page references are to this text.

The central problem that Stein addresses falls under the heading "the problem of other minds."[10] I know that there are persons other than myself, and I know that these persons have various psychological states and experiences. How do I know these things? At the time of Stein's investigation, a popular answer was that we acquire this knowledge through inference. According to this answer, our knowledge of the inner lives of others is via the following considerations: I am aware of my physical body, my internal psychological states, and the correlations between them. I can perceive the outward bodily motions of others, which I take to have some sort of cause. In my own case, similar bodily motions are caused by my internal mental states. I therefore infer that the bodily motions of other persons have similar causes, which are their mental states. This popular answer is *not* Stein's answer.[11]

Stein's answer is that we know these things by *empathy*. Empathy is an irreducible intentional state in which both other persons and the mental states of other persons are *given* to us. In an empathetic experience, we are *presented* with not mere bodies in motion, but rather with persons—and they are presented to us *as* persons who are angry, or who are grieving, or who are filled with joy. Persons and their mental states are not theoretical posits or unobservable entities—they are objects of which we have something akin to perceptions.

p. 199 The initial chunk of Stein's book is devoted to clarifying the intentional state of empathy and to distinguishing it from other intentional states with which it might be confused. (Another chunk of the book discusses what we must be like in order for us to be capable of empathy and what the objects of empathy must be like in order for us to be able to empathize with their experiences.) Stein (1) understands the problem of empathy as the problem of accounting for how other people and their experiences can be *given* to me despite their distinctness from me.

Stein wants to separate the epistemological, descriptive-psychological, and genetic-psychological aspects of this problem, which she claims has not been clearly done before. The distinction between descriptive psychology and genetic psychology stems from Brentano (1995). Genetic psychology, as the name suggests, is the science devoted to discovering the causal relationships between mental phenomena, as well as the non-mental causes of mental phenomena.[12] A genetic psychological theory will be supported on the basis of inductive arguments, empirical measurements, and so forth, and will be metaphysically contingent. By contrast, descriptive psychology is a science that issues necessary truths concerning mental phenomena: it is devoted to cataloguing the fundamental kinds of mental phenomena, the ways these fundamental kinds can compose more complicated mental phenomena, and the essential properties of and relations between mental phenomena. A descriptive psychological theory will be supported not by empirical induction but rather by a direct insight (or "ideation" as Husserl would later dub it) of the universal and essential features of intentional states.[13]

p. 200 As noted above, *On the Problem of Empathy* is essentially a cleaned-up version of Stein's doctoral thesis. Husserl was her dissertation director and main philosophical influence. But she was no mere follower of Husserl. Stein began studying under Husserl in Göttingen in 1913 and became his research assistant in 1916, when Husserl took up a position at Freiburg. Like many of Husserl's students at this time, she was attracted to the apparently stark and confident realism that seemed to pervade Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, although as many of these students also did, she could not follow Husserl when his philosophical explorations led him to embrace a kind of transcendental idealism.[14]

Neither the skeptical empiricism of Hume nor the idealism of Kant is embraced by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*. Hume was right that we should trace all ideas back to original impressions. Kant was right that we cannot account for the concepts we have given Hume's account of our original impressions. The solution however is to re-examine what can be given in experience rather than to embrace the claim that the understanding can contribute content of its own, independently of experience. As I read Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, the fundamental task of phenomenology is to describe the various ways in which objects of different kinds can be *given* to us.[15] According to Husserl of the *Logical Investigations*, more can be given in
p. 201 experience than mere sense data or Lockean impressions, which as a matter of fact are rarely the objects that
↳ we direct attention towards. What we perceive are not colors and shapes but colored and shaped things—we see tables, statues, puddles of mud, and so on.[16] Moreover, we can attend to states of affairs as well as objects, where a state of affairs is a complex entity consisting of some object or objects enjoying a property or standing in a relation to each other. Finally, we have intuitive representations of both *universal* and *essential* features of things. Universals—features of things capable of being multiply instantiated—can be objects of perception, as can necessary connections between universals.[17] These features can be revealed to us in higher-order perceptions that Husserl calls *acts of ideation*. (Acts of ideation are higher-order acts in the sense that they necessarily occur only if some other act directed towards the bearer of the universal also occurs.) So the list of things that can be directly given—rather than merely inferred or posited—is quite expansive and includes a stop sign, the redness instanced by a stop sign, a stop sign's exemplification of redness, the shape of a stop sign, and finally the necessary connection between redness and shape in general. That nothing can be red without being extended is a truth whose primary justification is in a sense perceptual.

Stein is fully on board with these doctrines from Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. One intriguing but also potentially metaphysically and ethically troubling way in which she extends these doctrines is noteworthy.

Recall that empathy is a sui generis intentional state that reveals to us persons and their experiences. According to Stein, just as acts of ideation can reveal the universal properties of the ordinary physical objects revealed to us in straightforward perception, so to we can perform acts of ideation on the objects given to us by
p. 202 empathy. These acts of ideation, according to Stein (95–96), ↳ reveal to us "spiritual types," or types of persons, and in principle we can discover essential connections between these types of persons and types of character traits. As I understand Stein, these types are individuated by the ways in which they are receptive or unreceptive to various kinds of values, with the ideal type being receptive to all genuinely positive values.[18] These types are instantiated by real people past and present, and so the study of these spiritual types is properly thought of as being the phenomenological foundations for the sciences that study cultural phenomena.[19] Stein (116) also thinks that through acts of empathy we can come to learn what type of person we are.[20] This is partly because through acts of empathy we can become more fully aware of what it is that we actually value.[21]

In any event, once we come to see that in principle a wide range of philosophically important data can be given to us in perception and other intentional acts, the possibility of a truly scientific philosophy becomes tantalizing. In a truly scientific philosophy, we would carefully examine the entities given to us as well as the various ways in which these different entities can be grasped and attended to. These different modes of givenness—that is, different kinds of intentional states—could be catalogued according to what it essentially is to be in one of these states. We could then proceed to describe these results and share them with others, who in
p. 203 turn could assess whether their perceptual data correlate well with our ↳ own. Once we have a comprehensive and systematically arranged account of the data provided by experience, we would be in a much better position to engage in any sort of theorizing that takes us beyond the data. We could in principle have a kind of scientific community of philosophers, provided that the phenomenological method is one that can be taught and hence propagated.[22]

Individual perceptions do confer epistemic justification—but one is better situated epistemically when one's perceptions form in conjunction with the perceptions of others a coherent and comprehensive picture of how the world is. However, if we know of the perceptions of others—and in general that others have mental lives of their own—only by *inferring* them by appeal to an analogy with our own case, the possibility of a scientific community of the sort envisioned by phenomenologists appears to evaporate. Hence there is a pressing need for phenomenologically oriented philosophers to face the problem of empathy. Husserl knew he had done nothing more than superficially gesture at this problem. When Stein proposed to him that she write on it, he thought her decision was "not bad at all."[23]

If one feels the attraction of a kind of idealism in which the comprehensive and systemic conjunction of one's perceptions with the perceptions of others does not merely increase the epistemic warrant for judgments of a certain class but also enters into the truth conditions of these judgments, then probably the problem of empathy will feel much more acute. But I hope the previous paragraph makes clear that even for a philosopher
p. 204 like Stein, who feels ↳ no inclination to embrace Husserl's idealistic turn, the problem of empathy is a central problem for the idea of philosophy as a research science.

In fact, for Stein, the problem of empathy is a central epistemological issue—perhaps it is even *the* central epistemological issue. First, according to Stein, my having the ability to engage in empathetic acts—acts in which the experiences of other persons are given to me—is a necessary condition for me to have knowledge of mind-independent reality.[24] Second, according to Stein, my having the ability to engage in empathetic acts is a necessary condition for my having certain kinds of self-knowledge, including knowledge of my values, the type of person I am, and even of my bodily nature.[25] In section 3, I discuss Stein's arguments for the necessity of empathy for knowledge of my own bodily nature.

But first I discuss Stein's attempt to distill the essence of acts of empathy.

2. Characterizing Empathy

Stein calls the internal mental states of other persons *foreign experiences*. One might pause at the idea that foreign experiences can be *given* to me. Wouldn't this require some sort of new age psychic power? Because isn't it obvious that other persons' bodies are given but not their experiences?

According to Stein, this last question embodies a fundamental error. Foreign individuals are given to me as
p. 205 "living bodies" and in ↳ each case as an "I." They are not given as, for example, mere bodies in motion. I see you not as another physical object in a world of physical objects; rather, I see you *as* another person. You are given to me as an object that bears psychological states.[26] This is not yet to say that your psychological states are given to me. That you are given to me as a person with an inner life is a thesis distinct from the claim that your experiences can also be given to me. But acknowledging that persons can be given as persons is an important step on the way to understanding the possibility of empathy.[27]

To see this, consider a useful but imperfect analogy. When you read a sentence in a language you understand, you do not see the words in that sentence as mere physical objects, or as mere marks on a piece of paper. (You actually have to work to see them this way.) You see them as words embodied with meaning. (As Stein notes on 76, Husserl established in his first logical investigation that words are, as she puts it, "phenomenal unities.") Moreover, you can focus on the meanings these words embody, meanings which in turn are capable of being embodied by different-looking physical marks. In short, words as meaningful entities are given, and because of this, the meanings themselves can be given.[28] If you mistakenly thought that words are never given *as meaningful words*, you'd have a tough time seeing how their meanings could be given.

p. 206 Let's turn now to episodes of empathy. I don't simply see faces. I see angry faces, or faces transfixed with wonder, or bearing expressions of grief. I don't simply see physical bodies as mere physical things but rather as embodying the lived experiences of the people in front of me. To the extent that this analogy between acts of understanding meanings and acts of empathy holds, we should not think that empathy requires new age psychic powers, at least not to any greater extent than what are required to understand the meaning of words.

There are several ways in which this analogy is imperfect. First, the relation between, say, a word and its semantic meaning is not the same relation as that between an expression of grief and the grief itself.

Second, according to Stein, there is a more important way in which this sort of analogy breaks down. On Stein's view, universals (of which meanings are a species) can be presented in a *primordial* experience or be *bodily given*. (These technical expressions seem to be used as synonyms by Stein.) When we engage in an act of *ideation*, which is the process by which we attend to, for example, the universal redness exemplified by a stop sign, this redness is present to us in a way that, by contrast, a mere contemplation of, say, the missing shade of blue is not.[29] Stein (82) clearly thinks that the meanings of words can be given in primordial experience. But in empathetic acts, foreign experiences are not primordial.[30] So there is an important distinction for Stein between two kinds of experiences in which something is directly given: among these experiences in which something is directly given, some (but not all) of them are primordial or ones in which an object is "bodily" given.

p. 207 At this point, it would be useful to draw a clear distinction between what it is for an object to be (merely) given and what it is for an object to be primordially given. This distinction is one that Stein takes for granted in *On the Problem of Empathy* rather than explicitly explicates. Many of her commentators follow suit.[31] So what follows is my conjecture on how she uses these terms. I am very indebted to correspondence with Elijah Chudnoff here, but he is of course not responsible for my errors.

An experience can directly give an object without it being a primordial experience. When an object is directly given to a person, that person thereby has a *singular* or *de re* thought of that object. To use the terminology of

Russell (1917), the person thereby has knowledge by *acquaintance* of the object. Think about the difference between the representation you have when you think the thought *first person to enter the elevator in the Hall of Languages this morning* and the representation you have when you see the first person to enter the Hall of Languages this morning. Second, when an object is given to a person, that person has evidence that the object has a kind of positive ontological status: it is present, or it is actual, or it exists, or it at least has some kind of being. (Since many philosophers, Husserl and Stein included, draw distinctions between several of these statuses, I am using the more general phrase "positive ontological status" in what follows.) This evidence can suffice, in appropriate circumstances, for the person to have knowledge that the object has positive ontological status. For example, when a physical object is given to me, I do not need to *infer* that it exists but rather can come to know that it exists on the basis of its being given to me.

p. 208 Let's turn now to primordiality. This technical expression suggests a kind of original or unfounded experience. Perhaps primordial experiences are ones in which an object is given but not in virtue of some other experience in which an object is given.[32] Alternatively but relatedly, perhaps a primordial experience is one that does require another experience in order to present its object. In this context, note that Stein (87) grants that empathetic experiences are founded on or presuppose ordinary perceptions of physical bodies. So the distinctions drawn above are important distinctions and ones that Stein recognizes, but despite what the word "primordial" ("originär" in German) suggests, neither is the distinction that Stein is drawing. First, as noted, Stein thinks that acts of ideation are primordial. But acts of ideation are founded acts—they necessarily require that other acts of straightforward perception occur. (Or at the very minimum, they require that other psychological acts, such as acts of imagination, occur.) I can ideate the redness of a stop sign only if I perceive some particular red object, such as a stop sign (or at the minimum imagine a particular red stop sign). Second, straightforward instances of perceptions of complex, three-dimensional physical objects that persist over time might require the presentation of numerically distinct objects as well, such as their surfaces or proper spatial or temporal parts. But in straightforward instances of perception, the complex three-dimensional objects are bodily given.

So what does Stein mean by "primordial"? As I mentioned, Stein says very little about what it is for an experience to be primordial. In footnote 21, 121, she writes, "The use of the term 'primordiality' for the act side of experience may attract attention. I employ it because I believe that it has the same character as one
p. 209 attributes ↳ to its correlate." The English translation here is unfortunate, since it is unclear what the second occurrence of "it" refers to—but this unclarity is not present in the original German sentence, which is, "Der Gebrauch des terminus 'originär' für die Aktseite des Erlebens mag auffällig sein. Ich verwende ihn, weil ich glaube, daß tatsächlich hier derselbe Charakter vorliegt, den man am Korrelat so bezeichnet." A better rendering in English of the thought that seems to be expressed is this: "The use of the term 'primordiality' for the act side of experience may attract attention. I employ that term because I believe that a primordial experience has the same character as what one attributes to the object experienced [i.e., the correlate of the experience]." What is suggested is that an act is primordial when it has some common character with the object that is the correlate of the act. What is this common character?

Maybe that commonality is fullness or intensity of sensation. Perhaps a primordial experience is one that is very rich in qualitative character, much like the object represented in that experience. But primordiality is not simply intensity of sensation, and it need not covary with intensity of sensation. Outer perceptions are paradigmatic cases of primordial experiences: when I perceive a table, this is a primordial experience.[33] Memories provide paradigmatic examples of nonprimordial experiences.[34] My memories of another person also depict that person as being certain ways. The contrast between outer perception and memory is helpful also in that it brings out why the primordiality of an experience is not to be identified with how intense it is. I
p. 210 can have very hazy and faint perceptions that I barely notice, which nonetheless are primordial. And ↳ I can have memories of a person so intense that they bring me to tears, even though they are not primordial.

Let's return to the case of outer perception. Suppose I have a primordial experience of a table. But suppose I am looking at this table from above and now consider and contrast my presentations of the table with my contemplation of the underside of the table, which is not facing me. I know that the table has an underside, but it is not *present* to me in the way that the table itself is. Perhaps the distinction between primordial experiences and nonprimordial experiences is that the primordial ones present their objects as "being there" or "being present." Since the experiences themselves are present, this could be the common character of the act and its correlate.

These remarks suggest that the distinction between primordial experiences and nonprimordial experiences is that in primordial experiences, an object, such as a table, is presented as *being there* or *being present*.[35] But these are not apt expressions since "being there" and "being present" can be used with locative senses (either spatially or temporally or both), but these senses cannot be intended in this context. Universals are not located in space and time, and so any perception of them that presented them as being located would thereby be mistaken.[36] But as noted above, we have primordial experiences of them.

Perhaps a better thing to say is this: when something is bodily given, it is presented as having some sort of positive ontological status such as actuality, presence, existence, or being.

p. 211 Unfortunately, although the distinction between experiences that present objects as having some sort of positive ontological status and those that don't is a legitimate distinction, it doesn't correspond to the distinction between primordial experiences and nonprimordial experiences. Stein (18–19) suggests that the question of whether empathy presents its objects as being actual is ambiguous and that one way to disambiguate the question is as whether empathetic experiences are primordial. Second, she suggests that empathetic experiences present their objects as "being there" even though they are not primordial.[37] She also says that a nonprimordial experience such as a memory still "posits" something and that what is remembered has being.[38]

We have so far failed to find the "common character" between the act and its correlate that is mentioned in footnote 21 and seems to be definitive of what it is for an act to be primordial. I conjecture that Stein endorses a Husserlian view about the structure of intentional acts according to which they are a kind of hylomorphic compound of nonintentional qualitative stuff or data that are imbued with a *sense*. (Briefly, Husserl uses the term "hyletic data" to stand for nonintentional mental episodes that consist of qualitative feels.) Consider a perception of a table. My act of perception is a fusion of sense data (which are a special kind of hyletic data) imbued with a sense.[39] In virtue of it having that sense, it refers to the object perceived, which in this case is the table. On Husserl's view, this fusion of sense data bears a qualitative likeness to the table itself.[40] To be clear:
p. 212 this fusion of sense data alone cannot refer to the table despite ↳ its qualitative likeness to the table. Nor does it have the sense that it has in virtue of its qualitative character.

Suppose when I see the table, I look at the table from above. I have certain sensations which coupled with a sense constitute a perception not merely of the top of the table but of the table itself. These same sensations when coupled with a different sense can constitute a perception of the top of the table. In both cases, though, the experience is a primordial experience. My conjecture is that an experience is primordial to the extent that the qualitative character of the sense data is similar to the qualitative character of the object represented. This conjecture allows for degrees of primordiality to correlate with degrees of similarity between the qualitative character of the sense data and the qualitative character of the object represented.[41]

In both outer and inner perception, the hyletic data resemble in some way the objects of the acts of perception of which the hyletic data are constituents. So my outer perception of a table and my inner perception of my joy are primordial experiences. But now one is in a position to see why an act of empathetic awareness is not primordial. Suppose I perceive your annoyance in an act of empathy. My act of empathy is a hylomorphic compound of hyletic data imbued with a sense. What is the nature of the hyletic data? Presumably the data are

the same sort of data I have when I have an ordinary perception of your face, albeit your face contorted with annoyance. But the sense of the act of empathy is different from the sense of the act of outer perception, even
p. 213 though the constitutive sense data are qualitatively exactly alike. Because these senses differ, the respective acts refer to distinct objects. The act of outer perception of your ↳ face is primordial, because the sense data in some way are qualitatively like your face. The act of empathy is not primordial, since the same sense data are not qualitatively like your own experience of annoyance.

Foreign experiences are given in empathetic experience, but they are not primordial in these experiences. The question of whether empathy in Stein's sense requires strange new age psychic powers can now be answered negatively. I would require strange new age psychic powers to experience primordially your joy or sorrows. If I experienced your joy primordially, your joy would be present to me in the way that (only) my joy can be present to me.

I've discussed what it is for an experience to be primordial, and we have now seen why (on my interpretation) Stein does not think that empathetic experiences are primordial experiences. Let's now discuss a second aspect of Stein's discussion of empathy; namely, the conditions under which an empathetic experience is "fulfilled."

For Husserl, all intentional states have what I call "fulfillment conditions." I give below a schematic characterization of what, in general, fulfillment conditions for an intentional state are. But first let me say what they are not.

First, the fulfillment conditions of an intentional state are not the conditions under which it is a successful state. Consider a belief that the sky is blue. The conditions under which this belief is successful are the conditions in which this belief is true; that is, they are its truth conditions, which for our purposes we can think of as the class of possible situations in which the sky is blue. Not all success conditions are truth conditions, though. My desire that the sky is blue is successful just in case the sky is blue, but circumstances in which the sky is blue are not circumstances in which my desire per se is true. Perhaps not every intentional state has successfulness conditions, but in general these successfulness conditions are not identical with the conditions under which the state is fulfilled.

p. 214 Second, the fulfillment conditions of an intentional state are not to be identified with either the object of the intentional state or the set of situations in which that object enjoys some positive ontological status. Consider an ordinary perception of a table. The object of this perceptual state is the table. The perception is correct only if the table purportedly perceived really is in front of the perceiver. But in the sense intended, the perception is not fulfilled by that fact.

So what are fulfillment conditions? Consider a given intentional state S had by an agent A. Recall that for Husserl all intentional states have associated senses. In virtue of these senses, these states are directed towards objects. In addition, in virtue of these senses, the states are directed towards other states—but these other states are not potential objects of reference but potential states that fulfill the original intentional state S. Call these other states *fulfilling states*. The fulfillment conditions for S are those possible situations in which A both has S at a time and has a fulfilling state for S at that time or later. So far, so good: we've learned that the sense of an intentional state is that in virtue of which the state (i) putatively refers to an object, (ii) has its success conditions, and (iii) is fulfilled by other possible intentional states. But obviously the notion of fulfillment has not been explained.

A natural but informal way to understand fulfilling states is that they give a more complete (i.e., a fuller) picture of the object represented in the state that they fulfill. Consider once again an ordinary perception of a table, viewed from above so that its top is facing the perceiver. The perceiver sees the table, although obviously the perceiver does not see all of the table in that act of perception. A description of the perceptual situation as one in which the perceiver merely sees a part of the table (such as its surface) and then *infers* the presence of a whole table is a mistaken description. The table is given in this act, not inferred. And this table is given partly

p. 215 because it is part of the sense of that act of perception that the act is a perception of a ↳ three-dimensional table. But because this perception has this sense, this perception can be complemented or fulfilled by further perceptual acts in which this same table is viewed from different angles. Each of these fulfilling perceptual acts gives us a more complete picture of the table.[42] Recall that on Husserl's view of perception, a perceptual act is composed of hyletic (sense) data that is imbued with a meaning or a sense. For outer sense perceptions—that is, perceptions of physical objects—we can understand their fulfilling acts in the following way: an outer sense perception F fulfills another perception S just in case (i) F and S are both primordial experiences and (ii) in virtue of the senses of F and S, F and S purport to refer to the same object, but the hyletic data that are part of F are not qualitatively indiscernible from the hyletic data that are part of S. It should be clear from this account that fulfillment comes in degrees, that we may speak of a state being more or less fulfilled. A state is "fully fulfilled" only when all of its fulfillment conditions are satisfied.

This account of the fulfillment conditions for outer perceptions is not a general account of fulfillment conditions for intentional states across the board. Perhaps offering a general account that is better than the merely schematic one I presented a few paragraphs back is not possible, just as it does not seem to be possible to offer a fully general account of when an intentional state is correct or succeeds. Perhaps the best we can do is to determine for each kind of intentional state its fulfillment conditions. In any event, we now turn to a question that Stein confronts. Specifically, what are the fulfillment conditions for acts of empathy?

One reason why this question would seem pressing to a phenomenologist is that there is no guarantee that, for any given intentional state of type T, the states that fulfill it must also be of type T. One class of intentional
p. 216 states, which Husserl sometimes calls, "mere ↳ symbolic presentations," are fulfilled by perceptual acts, for example. Mere symbolic presentations include the mental equivalents of definite descriptions. Suppose, for example, that I entertain this representation: *the first person to leave the elevator tomorrow in the Hall of Languages*. My entertainment is clearly nonprimordial and, moreover, is nonsensory. But roughly speaking, it is fulfilled by an outer perception of the first person leaving the Hall of Languages. So some nonprimordial experiences have senses that demand fulfillment from primordial experiences. Perhaps empathetic acts are like this.

If empathetic acts are fulfilled by primordial experiences, which kind of primordial experiences fulfill them? Here is where Stein enters into a debate with Theodor Lipps, who was an important psychologist and one of the principal interlocutors in the first section of Stein's work. As Stein (12–15) reads Lipps, Lipps holds that empathetic acts have a "tendency" towards "full expression." The idea is that what fulfills an act of empathy is an experience of the same kind as the object of the act of empathy. Suppose you experience joy in the birth of your child. Suppose that your joy is given to me in an empathetic act. On Stein's account of Lipps's theory, among the fulfillment conditions of my act of empathy is an experience in which I experience joy in the birth of your child. This experience of joy is a primordial experience in Stein's sense.

Stein rejects Lipps's account. She does not offer an argument against his account but rather merely offers an alternative account, which I now present. Stein does point out that not every nonprimordial experience needs to be fulfilled by a primordial experience. She claims (13) that an episode of memory is fulfilled when "its experiential continuity to the present" is established. This means that the episode of memories is complemented by further memories. The details of what it is for one memory to fulfill the other are not spelled out, so it is not clear how much of the analogy between memory and empathy one can rely on. Empathetic acts
p. 217 do present objects, namely ↳ foreign experiences, but remember that empathetic acts, like memories, are not primordial experiences. Since they are not primordial experiences, we can't simply appeal to similarity of the hyletic data of empathetic acts in order to characterize the fulfillment conditions of empathetic acts. But it does seem that empathetic acts can be fulfilled, because individual acts of empathy present a "partial picture" of the objects they present. Let us consider an empathetic act in which I come to know the sadness of a friend. (Suppose I see the sadness in her face.) The sadness of my friend is directed towards some particular object or state of affairs, but my empathetic act might not reveal this aspect of her sadness to me. The sadness of my

friend has a specific intensity, that is, there is some fact about how sad she is, but the depth of her sadness might not be revealed to me in an empathetic act. So there are at least two respects in which the picture of her sadness revealed to me by an act of empathy is incomplete. Perhaps further acts of empathy could provide me with a fuller picture of her sadness by revealing these aspects of it.

What this suggests is that empathetic acts are fulfilled by further empathetic acts.[43] This is a plausible theory. But Lipps's theory is also plausible. Here is a place where further investigation is important. In general, it is not clear how to assess when the sense of a nonprimordial experience demands fulfillment by experiences of the same type or by primordial experiences of a different type.

3. Empathy and Knowledge of Our Bodily Nature

According to Stein, we have aspects that we cannot have knowledge of unless we perform empathetic acts.
p. 218 Stein's metaphysic of the ↳ human person in *On the Problem of Empathy* is that human persons are essentially conscious living physical beings. Although she is willing to consider whether it is possible for there to be immaterial persons—I believe that at this point in her career her religious convictions are probably best described as basically atheistic—we are not possibly immaterial. But although we are essentially material beings, an existence as a lifeless material body is not a possibility for us.[44] How do we come by this knowledge of our nature?

Stein seems willing to grant that I could discover that I am essentially a conscious being without engaging in acts of empathy. But empathy is a prerequisite for the self-knowledge that I am a physical thing among other physical things.[45]

Here is why Stein thinks this. Suppose that I am a person capable of perception but not of empathy. On Stein's view (43, 57, 61–63), part of the phenomenal content of a perceptual experience is an array of impressions that have what she calls a zero point of orientation. My perceptual experience is perspectival: objects are presented not simply as being certain distances from one another but rather as being at certain distances from a center point. It is not strictly correct to say that objects are presented as being a certain distance from *me*—I do not appear to "occupy" this zero point if I do not yet have the power of empathy. Things seem a certain distance from this designated point—in a visual perception, for example, hands seem closer to it and the wall seems further from it than the hands, but I do not yet see the hands as *mine*. However, if we now allow that I have the capacity for empathy, your perceptual experiences can now be given to me as well. And because your perceptual experiences can be given to me (in a nonprimordial empathetic act), I can become aware of a distinct zero point
p. 219 of orientation from my own, namely ↳ the zero point of orientation embedded in your perceptual experiences. Your perceptual orientation represents my living body as being at a distance from the zero point. However, you are also capable of empathetic acts and so can recognize that I have conscious experiences—and what is even better, your empathetic act can be the content of a new higher-order act of empathy that I perform. And it is through this higher-order empathetic act that I come to recognize myself as a physical object imbued with psychological states. I recognize myself in this higher-order empathetic act as a being who is some distance from your zero point and who is ascribed by you as having experiential states at that distant location. According to Stein, this is how I come to recognize myself as a physical object in a world with other physical objects.

It's not clear to me that Stein has demonstrated that the possession of empathy is a necessary condition for self-knowledge of one's material nature. But still this is a very cool philosophical move: if Stein is right, not only must I have empathy but there must also be other people who have empathy in order for me to have this kind of self-knowledge. Knowledge of my nature requires a community. In this context, let me note that Stein also argues that there are constraints on what a thing must be like in order for us to empathize with its mental states. First, we can't empathize with a purely spiritual entity that does not communicate with us via a physical

medium, and moreover such an entity could not empathize with us.[46] Perhaps empathy without embodiment is possible in itself—Stein is explicitly neutral on this—but it is not possible for us.[47] Second, there are
p. 220 constraints on what these bodies must be like. ↳ We can perform empathetic acts on a dog.[48] But even if stones are conscious persons, we cannot empathize with them. Such stones would be too unlike us. So on Stein's account, there are *materially* necessary conditions on us having self-knowledge of our own material nature. It is not obvious how to square these necessary conditions with the kind of transcendental idealism Husserl favored.[49] So perhaps Stein found in her examination of the problem of empathy further support for her antecedent realistic tendencies.[50]

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Notes

1. See Stein 2002 and 2009 for her later phenomenologically informed treatises on metaphysics.
2. As one example of this tendency, J. N. Mohanty's otherwise masterful intellectual biographies of Husserl (Mohanty 2008, 2011) do not list her in the indexes, and she is almost completely unmentioned in the main texts, despite the importance she played in Husserl's intellectual life during the mid-to-late 1910s. (By comparison, Ludwig Landgrebe is listed in the

index of Mohanty 2011.) Her work on the nature of empathy is not even mentioned in the sections of the book that address the philosophical views about empathy considered by Husserl after she had successfully defended her thesis.

3. For a bit of context, Berkman 2006b, 1, notes that Stein was the second woman in German history to receive a doctorate in philosophy. Calcagno 2006, 263, notes that there were no women professors of philosophy at the time at which Stein sought professional employment.
4. Sawicki 1997, 187, reprints the letter. See Sawicki 1997, 187–188; MacIntyre 2006, 106–108; and Calcagno 2007, 13 for discussion. Bizarrely, Baseheart 1997, 12, describes Husserl's letter as "sincere." As part of the context for Husserl's attitudes, it is worth attending to Moran 2005, 34, who also notes that Husserl attempted to found a society for the study of phenomenology in Freiburg in 1917 and had proposed to exclude women from it, but when it was eventually founded, women were allowed to participate. (However, as Berkman 2006b, 24, notes, Husserl's circle in Göttingen welcomed women. One of these women was Hedwig Conrad-Martius, who became an important phenomenologist and metaphysician in her own right.) Calcagno 2007 also notes how Husserl's sexism led to differential treatment of his female and male students, of which the failure to support Stein's habilitation at Göttingen is one unfortunate instance.
5. See Berkman 2006b, 32.
6. See xi–xviii of the editorial introduction to Husserl 1991 for a discussion of the composition of this text. As noted by Calcagno 2007, 2–3, 12; and 2006, 248; Heidegger did credit Stein with "preparing" the manuscript; i.e., with typing it up. MacIntyre 2006, 110–111, also notes that Husserl does not credit Stein for some of the insights he draws on in his later work. For further insight into Stein's work for Husserl, see Stein 1993, 1–26; Ingarden 1962; Calcagno 2006; MacIntyre 2006, ch. 12; and Moran 2005, 29.
7. See Calcagno 2007, 20.
8. There have been several recent studies of Stein's philosophy, such as Baseheart 1997, Calcagno 2007, and Borden Sharkey 2010. Borden 2006b provides a review of the English literature written on Stein. I found MacIntyre 2006 and Sawicki 1997 extremely useful, especially for providing much of the historical context of Stein's early writings. But she is still an underexplored philosopher, at least among philosophers whose primary language of publication is English. (I do not know the extent to which she is discussed among philosophers whose primary language of publication is other than English.)
9. See Stein 1989, xiii, and Calcagno 2006, 24.
10. Stein's views on our knowledge of other minds are discussed in MacIntyre 2006, ch. 9.
11. Stein claims (1989, 26–27) that this theory was generally acknowledged as correct prior to the work of Theodor Lipps and was endorsed by philosophers as eminent as John Stuart Mill. She also notes (87) that it is not a particularly commonsensical theory.
12. Stein writes (1989, n. 31, 123), "For us genetic psychology and psychology which explains causally are synonymous."
13. Direct insight or ideation should not be conflated with introspective awareness, the latter of which reveals to us the states that we contingently have, whereas the former reveals to us essential properties of these states. Note also that according to Stein and other realist phenomenologists, we can have direct insight into the essential properties of non-mental entities as well.
14. Stein's unhesitating commitment to a kind of transcendental realism is one of the themes of MacIntyre 2006. See, e.g., Stein 1986, 250; Baseheart 1997, 38; and MacIntyre 2006, 66. Like Stein, I also read the early Husserl as a realist. See McDaniel (2014) for discussion. MacIntyre 2006, 75, is more cautiously neutral.
15. For a further discussion of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and its relevance to contemporary metaphysical practice, see McDaniel (n.d.).
16. See MacIntyre 2006, ch. 5.
17. See MacIntyre 2006, 21.
18. See Stein 1989, 108. For commentary on this passage, see Borden Sharkey 2010, 193–194. Borden Sharkey 2010 contains an intriguing discussion of how Stein's notion of a personal type soon gave way to the view that each person has an individual form, as well as a sustained argument against the later Stein's metaphysics of individual forms. A briefer discussion of this topic appears in Borden 2006a. Finally, see Sawicki 1997, 138–141, for objections.
19. See Stein 1989, 114–116.
20. See Borden 2003, 29–30, for a brief discussion of the ways in which acts of empathy can inform us about ourselves. Borden Sharkey 2010, 121, is also interesting.
21. Cf. MacIntyre 2006, 86.
22. Eric Schliesser has suggested to me that one general concern is that the skill involved rests on the same sort of mechanism that plays a huge role in generating groupthink (rather than genuine scientific consensus). Schliesser is right to be concerned about this. Perhaps the study of history of philosophy, cross-cultural philosophy, and empirical philosophy can serve as a potential corrective to this tendency.
23. See Stein 1986, 269.
24. See Stein 1989, 64. MacIntyre 2006, 61, 83, briefly discusses Husserl's and Stein's arguments. Baseheart 1997, 38, discusses

Stein's argument. This argument is briefly mentioned in Stein 1986, 269.

25. See Borden Sharkey 2010, 161–166.
26. See Stein 1989, 5–6.
27. And probably an important step to acknowledging the givenness of other persons as persons is to acknowledge the difference between how ordinary physical objects are given to us and how our own bodies are given to us. As Stein 1989 argues (41–48), my own body is not given to me as one physical object among others but as my own living body. Even though my physical body is a physical thing and can in certain circumstances be given as a physical thing, this not typically how it is given to me. (And it is not typically how it is given to you; rather, my living body is given to you as a living body of another person.) This is the case even though I am my living body (45).
28. This is one of the lessons of Husserl's first logical investigation (2005a), which focuses on meanings. Meanings are a species of abstract, timeless entities that form the subject matter of pure formal logic.
29. See Stein 1989, 6–8, for a discussion of ideation and primordiality.
30. See Stein 1989, 10–11.
31. See, e.g., Baseheart 1997, 33. More useful is Calcagno 2007, 38, but I was unable to distill from this a sufficiently clear theory to assess. Please note that this very well might be my fault rather than the fault of these authors.
32. This is how MacIntyre 2006, 77, understands this distinction.
33. See Stein 1989, 6–7.
34. See Stein 1989, 13. Other paradigmatic nonprimordial experiences are expectations and fantasies (7).
35. Borden 2003, 28, talks in terms of what is present in experiences and what is not present, which suggests that she endorses this way of drawing the primordial/nonprimordial distinction.
36. On p. 7, Stein 1989 clearly indicates that universals are neither here nor now.
37. See Stein 1989, 19, 63–64.
38. See Stein 1989, 8.
39. See Husserl 1983, 203–207.
40. See Husserl 2005b, 223.
41. Chudnoff 2012 criticizes the idea that this kind of qualitative similarity between the sense data of a perception and the object of the perception can account for the fact that perception is an experience with what he calls "presentational psychology."
42. See Stein 1989, 57, and Kockelmans 1967b, 140.
43. See Stein 1989, 57–58.
44. Stein 1989, 47.
45. See MacIntyre 2006, 76.
46. See Stein 1989, 87. However, see also 117–118, where Stein is more conciliatory and suggests the study of "religious consciousness" would be relevant. It is not clear to me whether religious consciousness is a different kind of intentional state than empathy or instead a type of empathetic act with a distinctive (divine) object.
47. See Stein 1993, 13.
48. Stein 1989, 58–59.
49. Cf. MacIntyre 2006, 102.
50. Cf. MacIntyre 2006, 75.