

EMPATHY AND PHENOMENOLOGY
EDITH STEIN'S THEORY OF *EINFÜHLUNG*

Abstract:

The main aim of this article is to present Stein's theory of *Einfühlung*. The foundation of her philosophical thought was interest in human being. On Edmund Husserl's lectures she often heard that an objective outer world could only be experienced intersubjectively by empathy. Stein defined *empathy* as a kind of acts in which one captures experiences of others. She meant that one can experience something that exists in another subject. In *empathy* the subject is not given experience from its source; there are two subjects taking part in that experience. Unlike in other conscious acts, here subjects are completely different from each other; they are not bound by identity-consciousness or continuity of experience. In that experience also human body plays an important role.

Keywords: Another Subject, Cognition, Empathy, Human Being, Intersubjectivity, Phenomenology

1. Introduction

Roman Ingarden, a student of Edmund Husserl, said that «the question of whether, how and to what extent we are capable of cognizing mental facts that occur in people other than ourselves»¹ goes beyond the theory of cognition and is not only important for philosophy, but also for the practice of life. Ingarden mentions various situations in which the answer to the question concerning the knowledge of other people's mental states seems important. He gives an example of a mother raising a child, a doctor, a teacher, a psychologist, a politician, a commander, or an artist². Indeed, it is important for each person, at least from the practical perspective, to learn about the psyche of the human being who is standing in front of them. Nowadays it is said a lot about empathy perceived as the ability to understand another person's feelings, to adopt their point of view, and to feel their mental states. It is emphasized that is important to understand other people, their feelings, deep motivations, and reasons for former behaviours.

An interesting vision of cognizing another person is presented by Edith Stein. Her philosophy is based on her interest in a human being. During Husserl's lectures, she heard that «an objective outer world could only be experienced intersubjectively»³. Thus, an experience of other individuals is necessary. Husserl calls this experience empathy, but it had not been defined precisely. Stein decided to fill the gap and examine the concept, and discussing *empathy* enabled her to study a person as a psycho-physical individual.

The objective of this article is to present Edith Stein's theory of *Einfühlung* as an important voice in the modern discussion on cognizing another person, to analyse the experience of *empathy* according to the Husserl's student, and to check whether a human body plays a part in this experience. The basic source is Edith Stein's doctoral dissertation written in 1916 under the supervision of Husserl.

* Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, Poland.

¹ Ingarden (1939).

² Cfr. *ibidem*.

³ Stein (1965), p. 191.

The article is divided into four parts. Firstly, it will be presented the background of Stein's views, then – her method of analysis; in the third part – her understanding of a human body, and in the last part it will be discussed her theory of *Einfühlung*.

2. Background of Stein's views

When *empathy* according to Stein is discussed, one immediately comes across a certain linguistic problem. Why does she use the word *Einfühlung*, and not *Empathie*, which had already been known in German at that time?

The noun *Einfühlung* is derived from the verb *empfinden* which consists of the prefix *ein* which specifies direction, and the core *fühlen* meaning "to feel, examine, touch". The notion of *Einfühlung* is a literal translation of the Greek *empátheia* the structure of which is similar⁴.

What the term usually means when it is used is the ability to understand another person's emotional state; to emotionally identify with them; to imagine what the other individual feels. However, Edith Stein thinks about another aspect of learning about the mental condition of a person. As it will be discussed later, she believes that it is possible to cognitively transfer oneself to another subject and to experience their mental states in a non-primordial manner. When one aims at having a given experience of another person, they are no longer an object in its proper sense, but, as Stein says, «having pulled me into it, is no longer really an object. I am now no longer turned to the content but to the object of it, am at the subject of the content in the original subject's place»⁵. That is why, some scholars suggest another translation of the term used by Stein: *intropathy*⁶. Similar suggestions appear, e.g., in Italian⁷ and Polish⁸. Interestingly, this subtle difference in meanings also occurs in Stein's use of *Einfühlung* and in its use by Lipps, Scheler and other philosophers to whom she refers in her doctoral dissertation⁹.

The roots of the notion of empathy reach the ideas of Hume and Herder¹⁰. Also, the issues connected with aesthetics are very important in this regard. The first reflections concerning the relation of the experiencing subject with the aesthetic object can be found in ancient philosophy, but systematic theories appear at the end of the 17th century. Philosophers tried to explain why, when a subject is looking at a picture or a sculpture, the subject does not only see paints or stone, but they also see that people presented in those works of art are happy or sad. The theory of empathy was to explain the following problem: on the one hand, there is a work of art as a piece of stone or wood; on the other hand, there is a subject who can perceive the qualities that are different than those available only to the senses¹¹. The theory of empathy postulated that a given person projects their mental state onto an object. Herder believed that a human being reads their own mood and emotions from a work of art¹². Lotze included a new factor to the theory of empathy claiming that this process is conscious and purposeful¹³.

The term *Einfühlung* was first used in 1873 by R. Vischer in his doctoral dissertation¹⁴, and the issue had also been studied by his father¹⁵. It seems that it was

⁴ Cfr. Moran (2004), p. 270.

⁵ Stein (1989), p. 10.

⁶ Cfr. Steinbock (1995), p. 49; Moran (2004), p. 270.

⁷ Cfr. Bello (2011), p. 32.

⁸ Cfr. Gierulanka (1988), pp. 7-9; Ingarden (1988), p. 173.

⁹ Because of this ambiguity of the term "empathy" depending on the scholar who uses it, a rule has been adopted in this text that when referring to *empathy* as understood by Stein, the word is written in italics, and in other cases without italics.

¹⁰ Cfr. Nowak (2011), p. 303; Golaszewska (1986), pp. 321-322.

¹¹ Cfr. Golaszewska (1986), p. 308.

¹² Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 321-322.

¹³ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 323.

¹⁴ Vischer (1873).

¹⁵ Cfr. Ingarden (1988), p. 171; Nowak (2011), p. 303.

popularized by T. Lipps¹⁶. Titchener introduced the term into English-language literature, translating it as empathy¹⁷.

The term empathy was used by phenomenologists with reference to the experiences of another subject. Husserl used the idea of *Einfühlung* to name the experience of other individuals within the intersubjective experience of the world¹⁸. He did not explain what such an experience exactly is. According to Stein, it was a certain gap which she wanted to fill¹⁹. Indeed, in the first part of her dissertation she referred to Husserl's lectures, analysing *empathy* as an act of cognition, distinguishing it from other forms of cognition, and comparing it with other concepts of *empathy*, especially with the theory of Lipps. This issue was studied also by Scheler who postulated the theory of inner perception for explaining the ability to cognise the mental states of another person. The views of Husserl, Scheler and Lipps constitute a certain background for Stein's philosophical thought. It is worth to briefly discuss that background.

Husserl's ideas on the cognition of another person are included in many of his works. He had already used the term in his manuscripts of 1905²⁰. In the lectures given during the winter semester of 1910/1911, he claimed that the subject – the empathizing "I" – experiences the consciousness of a different "I", but not in the same way as their own consciousness²¹.

In the first book of *Ideas*, he defined empathy as an experience which is not an original act: «This empathic viewing is, more particularly, an intuiting, a presentive act, although no longer an act that is presentive of something originarily. The other and his psychical life are, to be sure, given in consciousness as themselves there and in union with his organism; but they are not, like the latter, given in consciousness as originary»²². In the second book of *Ideas*, which were published after Husserl's death and prepared for publication among others by Edith Stein, he described empathy saying:

I can experience others, but only through empathy. Their own content can be experienced only by themselves in originary *perceptio*. Likewise, my lived experiences are given to me directly, i.e., the lived experiences in their own content. But others' lived experiences can be experienced by me only mediately, in empathy²³.

Also, he claimed that in this experience:

I put myself in the place of the other subject, and by empathy I grasp what motivates him and how strongly it does so, with what power. And I learn to understand inwardly how he behaves, and how he would behave, under the influence of such and such motives, determining him with such and such force, i.e., I grasp what he is capable of what is beyond him. I can understand many inner correlations, having fathomed him so. It is in this way that I grasp his Ego, for it is precisely the identical Ego of these motivations, ones that have this direction and this power²⁴.

Thus, through empathy, he wants to gain knowledge of another person's motivations. Due to this knowledge, he wants to learn about another individual's motivations, which may help him understand and get to know that individual.

¹⁶ Cfr. Meneses, Larkin (2012), p. 152.

¹⁷ Cfr. Titchener (1909), p. 21.

¹⁸ Cfr. Bello (1996), p. 367.

¹⁹ Cfr. Stein (1965), p. 191.

²⁰ Cfr. Husserl (1973), p. 4.

²¹ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 147.

²² Husserl (1983), p. 6.

²³ Husserl (1993), p. 210.

²⁴ *Ivi*, p. 287.

It is difficult to unambiguously determine which of Stein's views are based on Husserl's statements, and which theses were elaborated or even adopted by Husserl after Stein published her doctoral dissertation, after the defence of which (in 1916) she became his assistant. What is known for sure is that during Husserl's lectures Stein heard about the intersubjective experience of the world, and that she perceived his explanations as insufficient²⁵.

Also, Stein knew Scheler's early views on the Comprehension of Foreign Consciousness²⁶. In her doctoral dissertation she carefully analyses Scheler's statements concerning inner perception and she concludes that it is somewhat similar to *empathy*. However, what is more important are the differences among which Stein emphasizes the problem related to the non-primordially of *empathy*. She believes that inner perception is just «the apperception of "self" in the sense of the individual and his experiences within the context of individual experience»²⁷. Thus, it is possible to speak about the parallelism of inner perception and *empathy*, but only in the situations in which the subject has the experience of another individual with regard to himself²⁸. It is known that Scheler made himself familiar with the criticism of Stein who influenced the reformulation of his ideas²⁹.

Lipps' views are equally important for understanding the theory of Stein. Based on the concept of empathy, Lipps formulated his aesthetic theory which was mainly presented in the work entitled *Ästhetik*³⁰. However, it is important to remember that when one speaks about empathy according to Lipps, one has in mind something different than empathy in phenomenologists' ideas and, in particular, in the ideas of Edith Stein. Lipps' empathy refers, first of all, to the reception of art through a person's ability to project onto themselves of the content of a particular work of art, which leads to identifying oneself with the aesthetic subject. It is not until later that Lipps extends his concept of empathy and uses it not only with reference to the cognition of works of art, but also to the cognition of another human being. Lipps adopts this differentiation from Volkelt³¹. According to Volkelt, there is a difference of intensity in aesthetic empathy and everyday empathy: aesthetic empathy is stronger. Common, everyday empathy takes place through a watching sense (*durch schauendes Erfühlen*), and *schauen* has multiple meanings: it is not just watching with one's eyes, but also being in the presence of something³².

Stein notices that there are some common points between Lipps' theory and her concept of *empathy*. She states that Lipps perceived empathy as the inner sympathy with someone else's experience, which, in her opinion, may be identified with a higher degree of the fulfilment of *empathy* in her theory. The objectivity of empathy postulated by Lipps and its nature of claiming truthfulness expresses, in Stein's opinion, the same as her statement of *empathy* as a kind of experience act³³. Also, Stein refers to Lipps' concept of reflexive sympathy. She herself speaks about reiteration of *empathy* and extends the scope of iteration onto third parties. In other words, a subject may empathize another subject's acts among which there are acts of fulfilling *empathy* in which the second subject captures the acts of the first subject (which Lipps calls reflexive sympathy), or the second subject captures the acts of the third subject (which is postulated by Stein)³⁴.

²⁵ Stein (1965), p. 191.

²⁶ Cfr. Scheler (1913), (1915a), (1915b), (1915c).

²⁷ Stein (1989), p. 30.

²⁸ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 34.

²⁹ Cfr. Scheler (1973), p. 14.

³⁰ Lipps (1903), (1906).

³¹ Cfr. Golaszewska (1986), p. 323.

³² Cfr. Ingarden (1970), p. 115 ss.

³³ Cfr. Stein (1989), p. 12.

³⁴ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 18.

However, Stein claims that Lipps confuses «being drawn into the experience at first given objectively and fulfilling its implied tendencies with the transition from non-primordial to primordial experience»³⁵, which, in her opinion, would lead to the lack of separation between the subjects. Only after turning to the real “I” in a reflection, the existence of experiences of another subject is confirmed. This is a very important issue for Stein who strongly emphasizes the separateness of the subjects. She accuses Lipps of removing the difference between our own experience and our “I”, and another person’s experience and their ‘I’, as a result of which constituting our own body as ours and someone else’s body as theirs becomes incomprehensible³⁶.

In her detailed analysis, Stein also indicates that Lipps confuses «self-forgetfulness, through which I can surrender myself to any object, with a dissolution of the “I” in the object»³⁷. She also claims that, after fulfilling the tendency for full experience, one cannot speak about *empathy* any longer because, according to Lipps, in full experiencing, the empathized experience and the empathized subject disappear or last alongside the experience and the source subject³⁸.

Also, in her doctoral dissertation Stein analyses so-called genetic theories on the cognition of mental states of another person. Such theories include the theory of imitation, the theory of association, and the theory of concluding through analogy. She rejects each of these theories claiming that they are focused on the subject’s own experiences, and they do not properly explain the phenomenon of gaining knowledge of another person’s mental state³⁹. In a similar manner she rejects the theory of experiencing another individual’s awareness elaborated by H. Münsterberg⁴⁰.

3. *Phenomenological method as a way of studying empathy*

At the beginning of her doctoral dissertation, Stein claims that the phenomenological method is a way of analysing *empathy*⁴¹. She learnt about Husserl’s phenomenology while studying in Wrocław. She read *Logical Investigations* during winter holiday at the turn of 1912 and 1913, preparing for the seminar with Stern and Hönigswald⁴². She came to Göttingen in October 1913 to prepare for the state exam and write her doctoral dissertation. Despite the obstacles related to the World War I and some problems signalled by Husserl, she managed to write the thesis with the approval of her master. She defended it in 1916 with the *summa cum laude* assessment.

In understanding phenomenology Stein was inspired by the thought of Husserl. She knew his works, including the manuscripts, because for some time, after writing the doctoral thesis, she was his assistant⁴³. Some scholars believe that she understood the main method of phenomenology, i.e., transcendental reduction, better than Husserl himself, which was confirmed by the confidence with which she used the method and by the clarity with which Stein saw its functions and meaning⁴⁴.

What Stein means by phenomenological reduction is not being based on an existing science or a natural experience. Thus, the whole world which surrounds the subject is excluded, i.e., the physical world and psycho-physical world, «including the psycho-physical person of the investigator himself»⁴⁵. The statement of the existence of a given

³⁵ Ivi, p. 12.

³⁶ Cfr. ivi, p. 16.

³⁷ Ivi, p. 17.

³⁸ Ivi, p. 12.

³⁹ Ivi, pp. 22, 24, 26.

⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 35.

⁴¹ Cfr. ivi, p. 3; Valori (1985), p. 12 ss.

⁴² Cfr. Lamacchia (1989), p. 13; Gerl (1991), p. 15.

⁴³ Cfr. Bello (2002), p. 232.

⁴⁴ Cfr. Kijowski (1997), p. 25.

⁴⁵ Stein (1989), p. 3.

thing is excluded. However, the existence of what cannot be doubted is one's own experience of this thing and the phenomenon of this thing. Such exclusion or reduction is to protect the thinker against stating something that might be deceptive or uncertain. Due to phenomenological reduction, «we can separate the sphere of pure experience and its correlates»⁴⁶ about which one cannot doubt.

Moreover, it is not only a matter of discovering what particular phenomena contain, but also of reaching their essence. Thus, it can be seen that in her doctoral dissertation on *empathy*, Stein refers to the first book of the *Ideas* by Husserl. Some researchers even suspect that Husserl did not decide to publish the following volumes of the *Ideas* because he believed that the considerations of Edith Stein were more accurate⁴⁷.

However, it is worth noting that the above-mentioned reference to the *Ideas* was not uncritical. Stein noticed in some of Husserl's formulations the danger of idealism, and phenomenology was to be the answer to Kant's idealism, and the return to realism⁴⁸. Fidalgo says that, in her doctoral dissertation, Stein breaks up with Husserl's transcendental idealism: «the description of *empathy* and adequate criticism of full *empathy* cannot be reconciled with the egological approach of transcendental phenomenology. That is why, the discussion between Stein and Lipps is so important to understand her breaking with the idealist attitude of Husserl»⁴⁹.

4. Stein's understanding of a human body

Before it will be presented Stein's idea of *empathy*, it seems important to explain the way in which she understands human body. Bello points out that Stein perceives the corporeal dimension of a person, along with the spiritual and psychological dimension, as a necessary instrument of communication⁵⁰. Thus, it turns out that a human body is a tool the possession of which is necessary for learning about another person.

Stein uses the term *body* in a twofold meaning which results from the difference expressed in the German words: *Körper* and *Leib*. According to Stein, body is given in «acts of outer perception»⁵¹. It is being presented in those acts like a physical shape, but this is not the only way in which body *gives itself* to us. The own body is not entirely available through eyesight. Stein states that body calls one to look at it from different sides, but when one follows this call, it hides them «with more stubbornness than the moon and invites me continually to consider it from new sides»⁵². What cannot be seen with eyes is available through the sense of touch. However, according to Stein, it is that dependence of eyesight and touch that reveals the insufficiency to treat body only as a physical object⁵³.

Stein notices that one can approach or move away from any other thing or physical shape. While other objects are given in the changes of the whole series of manifestations and positions, own body is given in manifestations that change only slightly and it is always close, even more, it is always in the same closeness⁵⁴. One's own body is always here, while other objects are always there. Even if one closes the eyes and moves the hands apart; if one does not touch any part of the own body with another part, one still possesses the own body and feels connected to it: «precisely this affiliation, this belonging to me, could never be constituted in outer perception»⁵⁵.

⁴⁶ Węgrzecki (1992), p. 29.

⁴⁷ Sawicki (2000), p. XXI; Beckmann-Zöller (2010), p. XVIII.

⁴⁸ Cfr. Stein (1965), p. 174.

⁴⁹ Fidalgo (1993), p. 91.

⁵⁰ Bello (1999), p. 140.

⁵¹ Stein (1989), p. 41.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ Cfr. *ibidem*.

⁵⁴ Stein (1989), p. 41.

⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 42.

This twofold meaning of the term *body* used by Stein seems to indicate that she perceives it as unique and distinguished among other shapes of the material world. And the difference does not only boil down to the ordinary contradiction between a living person's body and a dead body. Human body is cognitively available from outside, but also from inside. For Stein, human body is *Leib*, a living body, always present for the subject.

A living body is the carrier of the fields of sensation⁵⁶. Edith Stein says: «the sensation of pressure or pain or cold is just as absolutely given as the experience of judging, willing, perceiving»⁵⁷. However, there is an important difference between sensations and experiences. Sensations do not flow from pure "I", so, when one directs reflection on them, one does not find 'I' in them; they are rather outside "I" although they are located somewhere in space. Those places are not empty, but they fill the space; they «are amalgamated into a unity, the unity of my living body, and they are themselves places in the living body»⁵⁸.

The fields of sensation of one's own body are primarily given in the so-called corporeal perception. Also, according to Stein, it is possible to experience them in an external perception, «in that very peculiar way where what is not perceived can be there itself together with what is perceived»⁵⁹. Stein calls this way of presenting oneself *con-primordially*, and she claims that other people's fields of sensation are also given to the subject in this way. It is a phenomenon in which one perceives an object that faces the subject in an external perception, but there is also another side to this object that is not perceived by the subject: «This givenness of the one side implies tendencies to advance to new givennesses. If we do this, then in a pregnant sense we primordially perceive the formerly averted sides that were given con-primordially»⁶⁰. A similar phenomenon takes place with reference to the fields of sensation of one's own body, although this is related to corporeal perception. With reference to the fields of sensation of another person's body, there can be no primordial givenness in either external or corporal perception, but in the experience of *empathy*.

Stein further notices that, although it is possible to say that the trunk is closer than hands, this is not a precise statement because it is difficult to speak about a distance from "I" which is not specified in spatial terms. Both the body parts and everything spatial outside of it are referred to «a *zero point of orientation* which my living body surrounds»⁶¹. However, this point is not geometrically located in a specific place in the body. What is more, it is given to various senses in different ways. The distance between the "I" and the zero point of orientation is zero, and, on the other hand, the distance between the body parts of that point is the same as the distance from "I"⁶².

Stein notices that two objects may be distant from each other; they may get closer to each other; or they can finally touch each other. It is different with human body. A thing may be far from it, or it can touch it. In the latter case, the distance between the thing and the body is zero, but the distance between the thing and the subject is not zero. It cannot be said that such distance is as large as the distance of the body part touched by that thing from the zero point. Stein gives the example of a stone held in a hand and she notices that «I could never say that the stone I hold in my hand is the same distance or *only a tiny bit farther* from the zero point than the hand itself»⁶³. These distances cannot

⁵⁶ Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 43, 57.

⁵⁷ *Ivi*, p. 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ *Ivi*, p. 55.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ *Ivi*, p. 43.

⁶² Cfr. *ibidem*.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

be compared, and «the living body as a whole is at the zero point of orientation with all physical bodies outside of it»⁶⁴.

According to Stein, the location of the body *in the zero point of orientation* is the factor that constitutes the body. When the subject captures someone else's physical body as the body that experiences sensations, in the *empathy* it moves into the other body and gains a new *zero point* of orientation⁶⁵. Stein notices, however, that the subject does not transfer his zero point, because he maintains his *zero point* as the primordial point. In the *empathy*, however, the subject receives a new zero point in a non-primordial manner⁶⁶. The obtainment of other points of orientation in *empathy* leads to crossing the borders of one's own individuality.

The obtainment of new *zero points* is possible due to the mobility of the body. Stein believes that objects in space, which are different than the subject's body, are grouped around it by the body itself. Objects are always there, while the body is always here. Grouping in space is not stable because objects change their location towards one another and towards the subject. Stein notices that the subject himself changes the location of those objects, or he changes his own location by moving to another observation point. Thus, the world is open to cognition, or what has been cognized appears from another side, and one's own body is always co-perceived⁶⁷. The possibility to move leads to a multitude of observations that enables one to spatially constitute their individual world. Mobility is related to spatial orientation. Non-existence of movement would significantly limit the multitude of observations, which would lead to questioning the spatial constitution of the individual world. Thus, it would be impossible to gain, in *empathy*, another person's point of orientation. Stein concludes that «voluntary movement is a part of the structure of the individual and is entirely nonsuspendable»⁶⁸.

According to Husserl's student, feelings are founded on sensations and, as such, they are felt where sensations are felt. Stein illustrates this with the examples: «the pleasantness of a savory dish» is felt where it is tasted, «The agony of sensual pain» is felt where it hurts, and «the comfort of a soft garment», is felt where the robe touches the body⁶⁹. Apart from the feelings founded by sensations, there are feelings related to «I» which are felt by the subject in the whole body although they flow from the non-corporeal sphere. Stein provides the example of tiredness which influences «every mental act, every joy, every pain, every activity of thought [...], every movement»⁷⁰. Also, human body produces *Gemeingefühle*, i.e., common feelings⁷¹. Those feelings «fill the living body and the soul», «color every spiritual act and every bodily event», «are co-seen at the living body»⁷². Another type of feelings includes the living phenomena, as Stein calls them. She enumerates the following living phenomena: «growth, development and aging, health and sickness, vigor and sluggishness»⁷³. Living phenomena reveal themselves in the body. While observing the body, «we bring this co-intended foreign experience to fulfilment by carrying it out with him *empathically*»⁷⁴. Apart from sensations and living feelings, which are co-perceived with what is corporeal, there is a phenomenon of experiences that are expressed through corporeality⁷⁵.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁵ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 61.

⁶⁶ Cfr. *ibidem*.

⁶⁷ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 47.

⁶⁸ *Ivi*, p. 68.

⁶⁹ *Ivi*, p. 48.

⁷⁰ *Ivi*, p. 49.

⁷¹ Cfr. *ibidem*.

⁷² *Ivi*, p. 68.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 75.

Feelings are expressed in certain ways, e.g., through blushing or clenching one's fists. Emotions related to feelings are expressed in different ways than through accompanying physical phenomena. Thus, according to Stein, it is not about «physical experiences issuing out of psychic ones», or about their simultaneous appearance, but about the completion of a feeling in a given expression or about the liberation of a given expression from a feeling⁷⁶. Stein says that «feeling by its nature demands expressions», and feeling is related to an expression «by nature and meaning, not causally»⁷⁷. One of the forms of expression is a corporeal expression. Therefore, on the one hand, there is a feeling which is *released* in the expression, and, on the other hand, there is a situation in which – due to the corporeal perception – the expression can be observed⁷⁸. Thus, human body plays the crucial role in expressing feelings. However, it does not only refer to the physical dependence, but also to the corporeal expression which relates to feeling in terms of importance and meaning.

Just like feelings, acts of will are not closed in themselves, but they reveal themselves in their effects; they become external in action. Will itself does not have an expression, but it is revealed externally. Stein perceives this externalization as action which includes creating something that does not exist: «The *fieri* of what is willed conforms to the *fiat* of the volitional decision and to the *facere* of the subject of the will in action»⁷⁹. Stein claims that «the will employs a psycho-physical mechanism to fulfill itself, to realize what is willed»⁸⁰. Therefore, «it can only be said that the willing *I* is the master of the living body»⁸¹.

Thus, Stein perceives human body as *Leib*, a living body which is always present for its subject. A living body is the carrier of fields of sensation, it is the zero point of orientation in space, it can move freely, it is built from mobile parts, and it is the field of expression of feelings and a tool of will. Human body perceived in this way is the condition for the fulfilment of *empathy*.

5. Stein's theory of empathy

To explain what *empathy* is, Stein compares it to other acts of consciousness. She claims that it is not the same experience as outer perception because in such perception it is given the access to temporal-spatial beings which present themselves personally here and now. The objects which give themselves in this way can, in outer perception, be viewed from different sides, and then the side which is being perceived gives itself in a primordial manner. However, when speaking about capturing someone else's experience, or their mental state, it is important to distinguish that mental state from its expression, i.e., from the way in which it is manifested. In *empathy*, one reaches an individual's mental state, perceiving corporeal expressions of that state in an external manner. As an example, Stein gives the facial expression of another person who is suffering. It is perceived and in outer perception it is given, but pain is not given in outer perception. That pain is experienced in *empathy*. Stein states that there is indeed a similarity between *empathy* and external perception: in *empathy* its object is also present here and now⁸².

According to Stein, *empathy* is similar to those acts of consciousness in which something that one has experienced oneself is given in a non-primordial manner. This

⁷⁶ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 51.

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Cfr. *ibidem*.

⁷⁹ *Ivi*, p. 55.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ *Ivi*, p. 56.

⁸² Cfr. *ivi*, p. 7.

happens in the acts such as remembering and fantasizing⁸³. Experience is given in a non-primordial manner when it does not have its object in the corporeal presence, but it makes this object present. Stein introduces two meanings of primordially: there is primordially of experience/act, and there is primordially of its correlate⁸⁴. Thus, experience/act is primordial if "I" is the subject. This means that «all our own present experiences are primordial. What could be more primordial than experience itself?»⁸⁵ Also, there is another meaning of primordially, i.e., the primordially of the experience content. And this is what takes place in the act of remembering or fantasizing. When the subject remembers happiness which he used to experience, the act of remembering is primordial, but the happiness that is being remembered is not primordial. Stein says: «the present non-primordially points back to the past primordially»⁸⁶. Thus, she concludes that *empathy* is similar to remembering in this sense that it is «an act which is primordial as present experience though non-primordial in content»⁸⁷.

Another important similarity between the act of *empathy* and the act of remembering is the fact of meeting between two subjects. In remembering, the present "I" meets the past "I". Despite the awareness of identity, the identification of two "I"s does not take place. The subject which is being remembered is always non-primordial, while the subject which remembers is primordial. Just like in *empathy*, there are two subjects which are independent of each other, and which do not identify themselves with each other.

Stein also pays attention to fantasy in which, contrary to remembering, experiences are given as a non-primordial form of present experiences. In fantasy, the experiencing "I" finds a certain "I" which it perceives as oneself although – contrary to what happens in remembering – this unity of both "I"s is not founded on any series of experiences.

Therefore, there is a significant difference between *empathy* and other acts of consciousness. The subject of the act of *empathy* is totally different from the subject of empathized experiences. Those subjects are not connected with the awareness of identity or the continuity of experiences.

To more precisely describe what *empathy* is, Edith Stein distinguishes it from comprehending or sympathy, although they are similar in meaning. Sympathy refers to other people's feelings and comprehending – to understanding the reasons for such feelings⁸⁸. *Empathy*, in turn, is experiencing someone else's mental states. Stein believes that comprehending usually comes after *empathy*, although it does not have to be the same. For example, comprehended joy does not have to be the same as *empathized* joy. First, the latter is non-primordial. What seems important is the second difference mentioned by Stein: that the joy which is comprehended is generally weaker, less intensive, and shorter than the joy experienced by someone with whom one *empathizes*, although in some circumstances it can be the opposite. Stein says, however, that «*empathic* joy expressly claims to be the same in every respect as comprehended joy, to have same content and only a different mode of being given»⁸⁹.

According to Stein, *empathy* should also be distinguished from feeling one, i.e., from sharing the experience of one feeling. Other people's experiences are not experienced through feeling one, but through *empathy* which may precede feeling one. Stein provides the examples of two possible situations in which *Einsfühlen* and *Einfühlen* are connected with each other. The subject may experience something, and, in *empathy*, it may capture

⁸³ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 8.

⁸⁴ Cfr. Węgrzecki (1992), p. 30.

⁸⁵ Stein (1989), p. 7.

⁸⁶ *Ivi*, p. 8.

⁸⁷ *Ivi*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁹ *Ivi*, p. 15.

the experience of other subjects, e.g., the joy of something. If the subject notices that the non-primordial joy given in *empathy* is the same joy the subject experiences, non-primordially disappears and the joy given in *empathy* matches the joy that is being experienced. A certain “us” appears, which grows from the “I” of the subjects and from other “I”s, i.e., this uniform act does not have many individuals as the subject, but it has one unit of a higher order⁹⁰. It may also happen that the experienced joy is completed due to *empathy*, and it captures other sides of the joy which were hidden for the subject. Stein says that, in this case, due to *empathy* the feeling of particular subjects is enriched and the joy of us is different than the joy of I, you and him⁹¹. Thus, she opposes Lipps’s view on this issue, as he pointed to a certain *amalgamation* of subjects. In *empathy*, the separateness of subjects, of one’s own and someone else’s “I”, is maintained⁹². In any case, the experience of others takes place through *empathy*, while feeling one, i.e., feeling unity, sharing the feeling of something, is of secondary nature and does not have a cognitive quality.

Summing up Stein’s considerations it can be said that, in her opinion, *empathy* is not based on associating, on concluding through analogy, or on imitation; it is not remembering, expecting, fantasizing; it is not feeling one, sympathizing or comprehending⁹³.

In phenomenology, the phenomenon of a thing and experience of a thing is undoubted due to the subject. Therefore, while the existence of the empirical “I” is not unquestionable, the existence of “I” which is the experiencing subject who watches the world and himself, is undoubted, just as the experience it is the subject of⁹⁴. Ingarden claims that this is the great reversal of the view on the world in phenomenology, as «in order to exist, awareness does not need any other being apart from the awareness itself»⁹⁵. However, just as the existence of “I” which experiences is unquestionable, the existence of other “I”s which also experience is also undeniable. If one wants to get to know the experiences of other I’s, one comes across various difficulties and illusions, but, according to Stein, «the phenomenon of foreign psychic life is indubitably there»⁹⁶. Husserl’s student believes that, while analysing this phenomenon, it is possible to start from the phenomenon of a foreign “I” which is different from other physical bodies and is a psycho-physical individual who experiences, feels, thinks, and who perceives the subject as a part of his phenomenal world, and who is the centre of this world at the same time. One can analyse how what is given, apart from the physical body, is constituted in the awareness. One can study particular experiences of foreign “I”s and one can notice that what comes to be known is not only what is expressed in external manifestations of a given psychological state, but also what is hidden behind those manifestations. This kind of act, in which someone else’s experience is captured, is called *empathy* by Stein⁹⁷: «thus *empathy* is a kind of act of perceiving *sui generis*»⁹⁸.

Machnacz adequately summarizes Stein’s views by saying that *empathy* «is a direct and evident experience of something located in another subject, which is why it lacks the so-called primordial evidence. In such an experience the intellectual side is taken into account along with the side of feeling»⁹⁹. Also, he writes: «the act of *empathy* includes a true meeting of two subjects, which is not physical touching but a full experience of the

⁹⁰ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 17.

⁹¹ Cfr. *ibidem*.

⁹² Cfr. Węgrzecki (1992), p. 32.

⁹³ Cfr. Meneses, Larkin (2012), p. 165.

⁹⁴ Cfr. Stein (1989), p. 5.

⁹⁵ Ingarden (1974), p. 221.

⁹⁶ Stein (1989), p. 5.

⁹⁷ Cfr. *ivi*, p. 6.

⁹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 11.

⁹⁹ Machnacz (1999), p. 112.

other "I"'s existence. [...] In *empathy* two persons meet and each of them maintains their own subjectivity»¹⁰⁰.

Full presentation of Stein's views requires emphasizing that, in her opinion, *empathy* is a kind of experience, and in each experience, illusions are possible which one can discover due to the acts of experience of the same kind¹⁰¹. Also, in the acts of *empathy* one can yield to illusion and one can correct those acts through further acts of *empathy* that revise the primordial act. There may be different reasons for the illusions, such as empathy carried out by the subject which adopts as the basis his own actual value and not the typical value: e.g., a person who sees assigns the sensations of colours to a blind man, or an adult assigns the ability to make judgements to a child. Thus, to avoid illusions, is necessary to make sure that the act of *empathy* is led by the outer perception because it is in that perception where it can be seen the physical body of the *empathized* subject. And further: «The constitution of the foreign individual is founded throughout on the constitution of the physical body. Thus, the givenness in outer perception of a physical body of certain nature is a presupposition for the givenness of a psycho-physical individual»¹⁰².

According to Stein, another circumstance in which it is possible to come across illusion in a single act of *empathy* may include the situation in which the expression of a mental state is ambiguous or false. In such situations, through further acts of *empathy*, one can correct or complete the primordial act. What is more, the following acts of *empathy* may refer to particular, single experiences of a given individual, but also, on their basis, one can capture someone's individual properties, i.e., personality traits. Thus, according to Stein, the following acts of *empathy*, which complete and correct one another, enable to capture someone's personality the knowledge of which is the basis for further correction¹⁰³.

The full presentation of the theory of *empathy* seems to require mentioning its criticism. Meneses and Larkin emphasize the possibility to make mistakes and experience illusions in *empathy*, as Stein herself indicated¹⁰⁴. Ingarden, for his part, perceived *empathy* as subjective, inadequate for the criteria determined by the subject, and too much dependent on psychology¹⁰⁵. Węgrzecki points to another problem which, in his opinion, Stein fails to notice. He asks why *empathy* should be that experience in which the subject gets to know other people's mental states. Why is *empathy* activated when the subject is dealing with another person's body? Węgrzecki claims that, if *empathy* is preceded only by outer perception in which *Körper*, and not *Leib*, is presented, then there are no reasons to conclude that one is dealing with a foreign body (*Leib*) at all. He concludes that Stein's attempt to avoid this problem (which she had to be aware of) through providing additional assumptions, is insufficient. Węgrzecki also doubts about the possibility of *empathizing* foreign sensations, which is postulated by Stein. Also, he rejects the view that due to *empathy* one can gain knowledge of another subject's perception of the world¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁰ Machnacz (2010), p. 42.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. Stein (1989), p. 86.

¹⁰² Ivi, p. 87.

¹⁰³ Cfr. ivi, p. 84 ss.

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. Meneses, Larkin (2012), p. 180.

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. Gerl (1991), p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ Cfr. Węgrzecki (1992), pp. 35-37. It is worth adding that Scheler (within his theory) indicated the existence of an unknowable sphere of a human being (cfr. Scheler, 1966, p. 556). And Zahavi emphasizes (though referring to Husserl) that another person escapes our cognition (cfr. Zahavi, 2001, p. 153).

6. Conclusion

In the first place, the analysis of Stein's views on *empathy* consisted in discussing her comparisons of *empathy* with other acts of consciousness, such as remembering, expecting, fantasizing, comprehending, or sympathizing. Those comparisons made it possible for her to notice that also in *empathy* experiences are given to the subject in a non-primordial manner, and that two subjects take part in this experience. However, contrary to other acts of consciousness, in *empathy* those subjects are totally different, unconnected with the awareness of identity or with a continuity of experiences. Thus, for Stein, *empathy* is a kind of act in which foreign experiences are captured. According to Husserl's student, human body participates in cognizing another individual's mental states.

Nevertheless, it is easy to notice some shortcomings of Edith Stein's theory. Perhaps her notion of *empathy* is perceived too broadly. Also, the statement that in *empathy* a subject can access a foreign body (*Leib*) may raise some objections. And even if in *empathy* a subject may actually have another's subject body given as a living body, does it really give the access to the actual and immediate knowledge of that person's mental state?

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