

### 3 Essence, *eidōs*, and dialogue in Stein's 'Husserl and Aquinas. A Comparison'

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**Abstract:** This paper provides an analysis of the discussion of essence in Stein's contribution to Husserl's *Festschrift* for his seventieth birthday in the light of her later work on essence and *eidōs*. It also makes, in the light of Stein's early work on intersubjectivity, an eidetic analysis of the intersubjective occurrence of dialogue. It is argued that Stein's understanding of essence, and of phenomenology as a collaborative enterprise, is rooted in the practical function of the *eidōs*, which, by enabling dialogue *about* something and also about essence, despite differing worldviews and concepts of essence, renders eidetic analysis possible in any intersubjective setting. **Keywords:** Stein, Husserl, Aquinas, essence, dialogue, *eidōs*, intersubjectivity

#### Introduction

For Husserl's seventieth birthday Stein wrote a dialogue, featuring the celebrant himself in conversation with Thomas Aquinas.<sup>1</sup> At the request of the *Festschrift's* editor,

1 Edith Stein, "Husserl and Aquinas: A Comparison," in *Knowledge and Faith*, trans. Walter Redmond, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein* (henceforth referred to as CWES), vol. 8 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2000), henceforth referred to as 'Husserl and Aquinas'. The original article in dialogue form is helpfully translated and published in columns side by side by Redmond, so that one can easily gain an overview of the divergences between them. The title is Redmond's and refers to both. The two versions are also published together in '*Freiheit und Gnade*' und weitere Beiträge zu Phänomenologie und Ontologie, *Edith Steins Gesamtausgabe* (henceforth referred to as ESGA), vol. 9 (Herder: Freiburg, 2014), 91–142, one after the other. See for an excellent analysis of the historical and systematic context in which the article was written: Beate Beckmann-Zöller, "Edith Steins Projekt zur Vermittlung von thomasischer und phänomenologischer Philosophie und die Spannung zwischen Philosophie und Theologie," *Edith Stein Jahrbuch* (2017): 99–133. See also Part III of Magdalena Börsig-Hover, *Zur Ontologie und Metaphysik der Wahrheit. Der Wahrheitsbegriff Edith Steins in Auseinandersetzung mit Aristoteles, Thomas von Aquin und Edmund Husserl* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006); Francesco Valerio Tommasi, ". . . Verschiedene Sprachen redeten . . ." "Ein Dialog zwischen Phänomenologie und Mittelalterlicher Scholastik im Werk Edith Steins," in *Edith Stein. Themen. Kontexte. Materialien*, ed. Beate Beckmann-Zöller and Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz (Dresden: Text und Dialog, 2015), 115–140 and Robert McNamara, "Essence in Stein's *Festschrift* Dialogue," in "*Alles Wesentliche lässt sich nicht schreiben*". *Leben und Denken Edith Steins im Spiegel ihres Gesamtwerkes*, ed. Andreas Speer and Stephan Regh (Freiburg: Herder, 2016), 175–194.

Heidegger, it was rewritten in treatise form, retaining the content, in particular a prolonged discussion of Husserl's and Aquinas' concepts of essence.<sup>2</sup> The dialogue form, however, reveals a practical function of the *eidos* that can only be captured in treatise form if the intersubjective occurrence of dialogue itself is discussed.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Beckmann-Zöller, McNamara, and Tommasi have all focused on the synthesis between scholastic and phenomenological thought prepared in Stein's *Festschrift* article (Börsig-Hover has focused on truth), the present paper focuses on the preparation for this synthesis, i.e. on that which makes the dialogue between the two interlocutors possible and on the features that make it a dialogue. Stein's understanding of essence in fact reveals itself in two complementary ways in the dialogue. On the one hand, the two interlocutors discuss essence and their respective understandings of these, at length. On the other hand, the *eidos* 'behind' essence (the *eidos* 'essence') is what allows the interlocutors to sustain their dialogue since it is by it that they identify what they talk about, despite having radically different concepts of it.

In what follows, I shall argue that Stein's understanding of phenomenology as a collaborative enterprise is rooted in her understanding of the practical function of the *eidos*, which allows us to identify things others are talking about, and thus enables translation between different concepts of the same 'thing'. The *eidos* also makes eidetic analysis relevant despite differing worldviews, since it makes us identify the practical necessity of there being some intelligibility to the things we talk about, and of which we may give an account to enrich or further our dialogue.

The possibility of eidetic analysis was, as Stein saw it, part of what gave to phenomenology its promise both as a science and as a project to found the sciences, including the humanities and the social sciences specifically dealing with the complexities of intersubjective constitution and its motivation. Since the *eidos* is available also when the dialogue is not, it always provides a critical potential for intersubjective constitution, no matter what might motivate it, and always keeps open the possibility of dialogue.

Since the discussion of essence lies at the heart of the *Festschrift* dialogue, we shall, in the light of Stein's later work on essence and *eidos*,<sup>4</sup> first discuss how and why this discussion makes sense to the two interlocutors (1). This paves the way for an eidetic analysis of the intersubjective occurrence of dialogue which draws on Stein's early work on the modes of intersubjectivity (2). The aim is to show that dialogue and essence belong together for Stein in the sense that there is no possibility of dialogue if there is nothing that allows us to identify the things talked about, and that there also is no need for essence, i.e. for an explicit and ponderable meaning of things, if it were

2 *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, X (*Ergänzungsband*) (Halle/Saale, 1929), 315–338.

3 Jean Hering, "Bemerkungen über das Wesen, die Wesenheit und die Idee," in *Jahrbuch für philosophische und phänomenologische Forschung*, IV, 495–543 sets out to examine the phenomenological understanding of essence and essentiality, which it claims is common to all phenomenologists. Stein explicitly relies on this work to clarify her own understanding of essence and essentiality in *Finite and eternal Being* (henceforth FEB), CWES 9 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2000); in German ESGA 11/12 (Freiburg: Herder, 2006).

4 Stein: FEB, Part III.

not for the need to explore them for what they are in dialogue, even if simply with oneself. Rendering explicit this insight completes Stein's published article and makes up for what is lost in its transcription to treatise style.<sup>5</sup>

## 1. How and why the dialogue on essence makes sense to the two interlocutors

*That* and *how* Stein could imagine Husserl and Aquinas in dialogue forms part of the meaning of the text, which portrays them searching for an understanding of each other's viewpoints with an openness to the possibility of learning something about the things themselves (the phenomena, the *eide*, and/or the essences of things) from seeing the world from the other's point of view. The dialogue makes sense to the two interlocutors because (a) they are both interested in what is being discussed and (b) because they are each of them able and willing to make sense of what the other says.

### *a. Their common interest in what is being discussed*

The earlier dialogue version of the article was entitled 'What Is Philosophy? A Conversation Between Edmund Husserl and Thomas Aquinas,' whereas the title of the published article is: 'An Attempt to Contrast Husserl's Phenomenology and the Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas'. The focus thus shifts between the dialogue version and the treatise version from a systematic discussion of philosophy to a contrasting of the two philosophers' philosophy. This should draw our attention to the further layer of meaning present in the dialogue form. The dialogue allows the two philosophers to address the same subject, each from within their conceptual framework, marked by their historical context but not unintelligible outside of it. Their common interest in philosophy, i.e. in what philosophy is, allows for a dialogue about *it*, necessitating a clarification of their respective positions, without the focus being primarily on these.

5 As a literary genre, the dialogue was practiced infrequently in the writings of the phenomenologists. Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Metaphysische Gespräche* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1921) was a dialogue, with which Stein engaged in *Potency and Act* and *Finite and Eternal Being* to clarify her own position, and she was probably familiar with the dialogue already when she wrote hers. Stein later wrote minor dialogues as well as plays for her sisters. Conrad-Martius' dialogue is between the more experienced Montanus and the young Psilander, who seek each other out because of a deep interest in the matters discussed. Montanus affirms of the dialogue that 'we do not wish to define, but to search', an attitude portrayed as appropriate to the subject matter; fixation in definitions is not what the conversation is about, but rather insight, as this is how the essence manifests itself to the one looking for it. What is decisive in the process is not what is said, but what transpires or is revealed to the interlocutors through it, and thus it comes to a natural close when the interlocutors have reached a point of saturation: 'But now, Psilander, it seems to me that we have sort of talked ourselves to the end of this road, and that we would have to start again completely from the beginning if we were to catch something new from the infinity of possible openings.' As the dialogue progresses, it discloses the commitment of each to gain insight into something through the dialogue, of which neither, whether at the beginning or at the end, have a complete or definitive grasp. In all of these features it could well have served as a '*Vorbild*' for Stein's dialogue.

The clarifications serve the purpose of furthering the dialogue so it can unfold in its exploration of the topic. When the dialogue is broken off, it happens not because a conclusion has been reached, but because they have both learnt enough about the other's understanding of philosophy for the day and it is time to go to bed.<sup>6</sup>

The two interlocutors have an interest in discussing the nature of philosophy with each other not only because they share this interest but also because their conceptions of philosophy are so different that each lends a new light to the other's conception.<sup>7</sup> Without either of them committing to an understanding of philosophy to which the other could agree, they are able to discuss philosophy because they are both directed by the *eidos* 'philosophy' in such a way as to be able to identify 'philosophy' and discuss their various conceptions of it. This directedness directs them to the things themselves and shapes in them an attitude, which in German would be called '*sachlich*'.<sup>8</sup>

*b. The interlocutors' ability and willingness to make sense of what the other says*

Motivation to learn about something is not enough to keep a dialogue going, skill is also required. This skill is on the one hand the ability to interpret what the other says, which in turn is intimately linked with the willingness to find meaning in it for oneself, a process by hermeneutics referred to as the 'hermeneutic circle'.<sup>9</sup> The skill, which in this circularity involves the self as well as the other, amounts to a consideration of, or an attention to, the meaning which the other expresses in such a way that it acknowledges

6 In a tribute to John Cleary, Brendan O'Byrne characterises the dialogue as standing in opposition to systematic philosophy by an open-endedness that need not rely on 'true wisdom' and a finished 'view of the whole' out of reach for mortals, such that it is a privileged means of portraying the human predicament as regards knowledge and wisdom. The fact that Stein did rewrite the dialogue in treatise form indicates that she also considered essays in systematic philosophy contributions to an ongoing dialogue. In this way her dialogue mediates the insight about essence that it is equally impossible to obtain a definitive view of the whole of it and to do without looking for it. Brendan O'Byrne, "John Cleary: A Philosophical Portrait," in *Studies on Plato, Aristotle and Proclus. Collected Essays on Ancient Philosophy of John Cleary*, ed. John Dillon, Brendan O'Byrne and Fran O'Rourke (Leiden: Brill, 2013), xvi.

7 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Unfähigkeit zum Gespräch," in *Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzungen. Register. Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 2 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993), 207–215, here 211: 'Something has become a dialogue for us, if it has left something behind in us. Not the fact that we experienced something new made the dialogue into a dialogue, but the fact that we met something in the other, that we had not yet met in our own experience of the world' (my translation).

8 Paul Friedländer sees it as a characteristic of Socrates to always pay attention to 'die Sache': "Dialog," in *Platon. I. Eidos, Paideia, Dialogos* (Berlin-Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter et Co., 1928), 180–198, here 182. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Vom Zirkel des Verstehens," *Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzungen. Register. Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 2 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993), 57–65, here 58: "Das Ziel alles Verstehens ist das Einverständnis in der Sache."

9 Gadamer, "Vom Zirkel des Verstehens." That one can understand the whole from the particular instances and the particular instances from the whole also means that the individual and his meaning-making can be understood from the meaning of the whole and *vice versa*.

its meaningfulness both for me and in itself, independently of me.<sup>10</sup> The attention to the meaning expressed thus reaches out to the essence of things to presuppose them, it finds meaning *in things*, as mediators of objective meaning, not simply expressions of the subjectivity of the other or of myself, the acceptance of which would abolish the distinction between him and me. Thus consideration relies on confidence in the non-transitional identity of myself and the other on the one hand, and on a lack of fear of adjusting one's perspective to that of the other for reasons one can consider good on the other hand. Consideration thus reposes on a completed constitution of oneself as a human person, which is not susceptible to be affected by sentient contagion such that non-personal efficacy overrules personal response and responsibility. Such completed constitution includes the renunciation of recourse to any compensation mechanisms (e.g. projection, introjection, transference, or addiction), which compromises personal integrity.<sup>11</sup> Both interlocutors are portrayed as being considerate in this sense, i.e. as being able to respond. Neither are aggressively imposing a point of view, and both are unafraid of casting their thoughts in unfamiliar terms and considering adjusting their ways of thinking to concepts proposed by the other.<sup>12</sup>

SAquinas proposes as point of departure for their discussion their common accord on the fact that philosophy ought to be done as a 'rigorous science'.<sup>13</sup> Having stated that they are both convinced that a *logos* stands behind all that is, and that it is possible to uncover aspects of this *logos*, he claims that they differ, however, on 'how far this procedure of uncovering the *logos*' can take them.<sup>14</sup> Whether SAquinas thinks Husserl would allow for a higher degree of uncovering of the *logos* than himself or that SAquinas' faith allows him to uncover the *logos* to a higher degree is left open. The discussion unfolds in fact between these two possibilities, without settling on any of them.

Stein lets SAquinas continue his explanation:

Neither you nor I ever had any doubts about the power of *ratio* [. . .] but for you *ratio* was never more than natural reason, while for me the distinction between natural and supernatural reason arises at this point. You are raising your hand defensively, meaning I have misunderstood you. I expected this protest. 'Reason' for you lies beyond its division into 'natural' and 'supernatural'. Distinctions like this, you say, would be empirical. You were referring not to the reason of a human being or of a superhuman being, but to reason as such, to what must be the case – notwithstanding any empirical distinctions – wherever reason is meaningfully discussed.<sup>15</sup>

10 Paul Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II* (Paris : Seuil, 1986).

11 Mette Lebech, "Stein's Understanding of Mental Health and Mental Illness," in *Empathy, Sociality, and Personhood. Essays on Edith Stein's Phenomenological Investigations*, ed. Elisa Magri and Dermot Moran (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017), 107–123.

12 It is possible that not all modern Thomists would be able to recognise Thomas' ability to read modern philosophy this charitably. It represents Stein's certain hope that it is possible to reach an understanding between medieval and modern philosophy, and that an adequately motivated, saintly philosopher would have acquired it. SAquinas (Stein's Aquinas) seems more inclined to admit to not having thought about something than SHusserl (Stein's Husserl). It is equally possible some contemporary Husserlians would find the portrait of Husserl embarrassing. It represents Stein's intimate knowledge of him and her respect for his desire to enter into dialogue.

13 Stein, "Husserl and Aquinas," 8.

14 *Ibid.*, 9.

15 *Ibid.*, 9–10.

SAquinas seems to perfectly understand SHusserl's understanding of essence: for something to be discussed meaningfully (here 'reason'), it must be assumed to be intelligible (identified in the light of the *eidos* as having an essence). Knowing the meaning of the word means grasping the intelligibility of that which it means as well as the essence of that which is meant by it, and thus 'reason' must mean something identical in its 'natural' and 'supernatural' versions, which can be addressed before discussing its factual (i.e. empirical) varieties. Yet: 'transcendental criticism in your sense,' SAquinas continues, 'was not my cause. I was always dealing with realities – "naively", as you would say.'<sup>16</sup> But if he were to take SHusserl's viewpoint – and why should he not?, as he says – a great deal can be said about the essence of reason as such, about the notion or '*ratio*' of reason apart from how it is instantiated in the different kinds of knowing beings, human beings, angels, and God.<sup>17</sup> But in this analysis, SAquinas complains, 'you proceed as though our reason had no limits in principle',<sup>18</sup> and also as if there were no other way to know apart from natural reason, which will never reach its goal even if it can approach it step by step, the goal being infinitely removed. SAquinas could not 'admit that this is the *only* way of knowledge',<sup>19</sup> nor that truth can only be actualised in an unending process and never fully. For him, full truth *is*, it is *divine knowledge*. Humans, however, do not *naturally* have part in it, although they can be made partakers in it *supernaturally*.

The problem for SAquinas is that Husserl's intuition of *a priori* essences seems to be more like divine insight into the absolute features of beings than it is characteristic of or obtainable by human knowledge. To SAquinas we *are* capable of such insight, but in this life only by means of faith; he is objecting that SHusserl is missing the distinction between natural and supernatural reason, resulting in a lack of awareness of the contribution of supernatural reason to the acquisition of insight into essences. At this point the reader is bound to be interested in knowing what this contribution of supernatural reason to essence intuition might be, and the rest of the dialogue does indeed revolve around this. But it revolves around this because the question is also of interest to SAquinas, who does not quite seem to have a ready answer. He is thus thinking out loud, in the confidence that SHusserl's perspective might help him in the process to gain some clarity on the issue.

SHusserl therefore now takes centre stage. He replies that it never occurred to him to contest the 'right to faith'. But he claims that although it can be justifiably appealed to in religion, it cannot be so in philosophy: 'what you were saying seems to be nothing short of giving faith a deciding vote on crucial questions in the theory of knowledge'.<sup>20</sup> By stating simply how he perceives SAquinas' criticism, without feelings of animosity reducing him to reacting, he gives SAquinas space to provide an equally simple answer. The dialogue continues because both interlocutors have confidence that the other is addressing the issues separating them in the light of the *eide* and is not using words with any other intention than to explain. They are both

16 Ibid., 10.

17 Stein here uses '*ratio*' as Aquinas uses it, when he uses it as a means for carrying objective meaning (often translated with 'notion'). She will later identify the *species* as something of which we, also according to SAquinas, have immediate intuition, such that SAquinas admits of the possibility of immediate (*a priori*) essence intuition and hence eidetic analysis, but this is the not the problem she deals with here.

18 Stein, "Husserl and Aquinas," 11.

19 Ibid., 12.

20 Ibid., 15.

confident that they are talking *about* something, about reason and its limits here, and in general about philosophy and the role of reason in it. SAquinas responds that he raised the issue of supernatural reason to reveal the limits of a philosophy based on purely natural reason. He explains: ‘A rational understanding of the world, that is, a metaphysics – in the end, surely, the intention, tacit or overt, of all philosophy – can be gained only by natural and supernatural reason working together’.<sup>21</sup> The loss of the appreciation of this fact, he moreover claims, accounts for the mistrust of metaphysics felt by so many modern thinkers, among which he, no doubt, includes Husserl. SAquinas thus moves towards claiming, as Stein later will, that the work of human reason, issuing in an understanding of the world in its entirety, cannot be achieved by natural reason alone. It will rely, whether explicitly or implicitly, on faith, because human reason is limited.<sup>22</sup> Still, the question we have been pursuing nevertheless remains: does essence intuition also rely on faith?

The knowledge Husserl seeks may well be God’s own knowledge.<sup>23</sup> This indeed is what metaphysics studies, according to SAquinas, but if inverted through ‘a shift of sign’ to transcendental phenomenology, now centred on the subject, SHusserl ‘could not succeed [. . .] in winning back from the realm of immanence that objectivity from which you had after all set out and insuring which was the point’.<sup>24</sup> The more, in other words, SHusserl were to remove from the sphere of immanence any trace of transcendence, the more the impossibility of this enterprise would show, not because it was impossible in itself (it is possible for God), but because it is impossible for *us*, given the constitutional limits of human reason.

Although SHusserl declines to discuss this point and instead proceeds to raise an issue he would need to have addressed before he could, the move is not a refusal to address SAquinas’ question, but rather an attempt to make meaningful for himself what SAquinas proposes. The turn brings us to the heart of our matter:

You spoke of ontology *or* metaphysics. I am used to keeping the two terms apart. I wished to establish as sciences of essence – those making no use of empirical findings – what I called formal and material ontology: disciplines presupposed to all activity of the positive sciences.<sup>25</sup>

Metaphysics in SAquinas’ sense seems to SHusserl a science of *this* world. He therefore proceeds to ask how SAquinas views the distinction between *essence* and *fact*, between *eidetics* and *empirics*. SAquinas admits to not distinguishing these as a matter of methodological principle in his philosophy. He seems to consider whether this

21 Ibid., 19.

22 Although this position is Stein’s, it is one she thinks Aquinas would have come to, had he lived through the crisis of the Reformation and its ramifications for modern philosophy. And thus she lets SAquinas assure the reader and SHusserl in that one ‘will find scarcely anything of what I have just been saying about the relation of faith and reason in my writings. For me, it was all a self-evident starting-point. I am speaking now from a later reflection on how I actually proceed, as it is needed today for a rapprochement with moderns’. Stein, “Husserl and Aquinas,” 20.

23 Stein, “Husserl and Aquinas,” 23.

24 Ibid., 32.

25 Ibid., 34.

was legitimate on his part, and while thus engaged, he muses that faith's contribution to eidetic intuition is 'largely knowledge of facts'.<sup>26</sup> This would imply that faith might not, for SAquinas, formally affect the intuition of essences, however much faith might influence the experience of facts (the believer experiences the world as created, fallen and redeemed). This could mean that eidetic intuition with its corollary of eidetic variation, is available as a method to the believer and the non-believer alike, even if they might well experience things differently, and hence contribute different things to an intersubjective eidetic analysis. Having thought about this, SAquinas seeks to account for his understanding of the distinction between essence and fact. 'What applies to things according to their essence is as it were the basic scaffolding of the world. And what befalls them accidentally is already provided for in their essence as possibility'.<sup>27</sup> In this way the distinction between essence and accident reflects the distinction between essence and fact without being identical to it. But he reiterates that 'a play of free possibilities was not my concern'.<sup>28</sup> Even so, 'both senses [of essence as distinct from fact and essence as distinct from accident] are present in my writings, and we could follow up each one by itself, bringing together what belongs [respectively] to "ontology" and to "metaphysics"'.<sup>29</sup> SAquinas is thus granting SHusserl that it is possible to distinguish between what pertains to essence as such and what pertains to factual being, and that this distinction would give rise to a differentiation between ontology, investigating the former, and metaphysics, investigating the latter.<sup>30</sup> He furthermore proposes that methodical essence intuition can be 'summed up in three points on which there is complete agreement between your way of proceeding and mine, underneath a cover of apparent opposition'.<sup>31</sup> These are: (a) all knowledge begins with sensation, (b) all natural knowledge is obtained through intellectual work on material provided by the senses, and (c) intuition is both active and passive.

- a SAquinas starts by considering what is meant by the claim that 'insight into essence needs no basis in experience'.<sup>32</sup> With this claim, SAquinas states, Husserl 'only' means that the philosopher, for his analysis of something, does not need an actual experience of it, but that a clear intuition of it might serve, such that the positing in existence of the thing is thereby not annulled, but merely suspended for methodological reasons.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the phenomenological reduction does not alter the fact that the experience of the thing has begun in sense experience.

26 Ibid., 35–36.

27 Ibid., 37.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 38.

30 It is likely that some Thomists would object to the distinction being made by SAquinas. It is because Stein's Aquinas understands and accepts this distinction as justified that Stein's Thomism is compatible with phenomenology. Stein herself will retain the distinction and make use of it both in *Potency and Act* and in *Finite and Eternal Being*. It will give to her 'attempt to ascend to the meaning of being' a distinctly platonic dimension as she identifies the *eide* as the ideas of God and the essences a having both ideal and real being.

31 Stein, "Husserl and Aquinas," 41, translation adapted, see ESGA 9, 109.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 41–42, see ESGA 9, 109.



- b Next SAquinas notes their agreement on the fact that knowledge is obtained through intellectual work on sense material. SHusserl denies that eidetic intuition is acceded to either through induction or abstraction, as the intelligibility of the thing, according to him, is not dependent on other things being similar to it. The only kind of ‘abstraction’ to which SHusserl admits is a disregarding of ‘what applies only “contingently” to the thing’, of whatever could be different in it without it ceasing to be this thing. Positively this means focussing on what belongs to the thing as such, to what SAquinas calls the *ratio* of the thing, the ‘notion’ of the thing or the thing’s idea. SAquinas claims to have made frequent use of this procedure. In so far as Aquinas has, it is clear he would have a means of distinguishing ontology and metaphysics as SHusserl does and of giving meaning to essence being *a priori*. SAquinas moreover affirms that essence intuition is a penetration of the objects and objective interrelations, an *intus legere*, not opposed to thinking, ‘as long as we take “thinking” in the broad sense required, and that this seeing is a contribution of the *understanding*’.<sup>34</sup>
- c Finally, SAquinas explains his agreement with SHusserl concerning the active and passive aspects of understanding. What is at stake is the receptive contemplation of the essences, for SHusserl actively acquired through eidetic variation and analysis. SAquinas takes the position that ‘for human understanding, insight signifies the ideal limit of its performance capability. [. . .] at this point the human spirit touches the sphere of the higher spirits’.<sup>35</sup> He grants that human beings have immediate insight into fundamental principles and is quite prepared to give them *a priori* status, as accessible to the mind through the performance of its own acts. To the charge that SHusserl claims ‘for what you call “truths of essence” that immediate insight that I grant to principles’, SHusserl answers that he does think that philosophy works with an open plurality of axioms of which there is immediate insight. Some of these have content, into which a specifically intellectual insight not derived from sense experience can be obtained. SAquinas agrees that there could possibly be truths of content had by insight, such as those that SHusserl would talk about when speaking of truths of essence. But if there were, these would not be known by immediate insight, although they might be known by eidetic analysis.<sup>36</sup> There could be immediacy of knowledge in one further way. To the immediate knowledge of the good and of our own existence, there also comes knowledge of the external world and of the essences of things mediated through *species*. Knowledge of the *species* themselves is not knowledge through *species*. It is however still mediated in the sense of being acquired actively.<sup>37</sup> *Species* (notions or concepts) is the material with which eidetic variation works, and our intuition of them is immediate in the sense that we can at any point turn to contemplate them, i.e. turn to contemplate what we think something is. What needs to be worked on to get to a unified view of that, is all of what we think about this thing, such that it is worked into one coherent notion, and this requires sustained rational effort. Again, the immediacy of the insight does not in

34 *Ibid.*, 45.

35 *Ibid.*, 46–47, translation adapted, see ESGA 9, 111.

36 *Ibid.*, 52.

37 *Ibid.*, 56.

this instance mean that it is obtained without effort. There remains for SAquinas, however, ‘a discrepancy between the species of the things which the *intellectus agens* actively acquires and the essence of the thing as it is in itself.’<sup>38</sup> Only the blessed and the angels see the essence directly and as it is in itself, because they see it in the Λογος, i.e. from within the knowledge that is God’s own since they inhabit His wisdom. *That* insight can only be had as mediated through faith in *statu via*, and then of course, darkly, as in a mirror. And thus we are back to the contribution of supernatural reason to the certain knowledge of things *as they are in themselves*.

The quality of the dialogue portrayed has reached a sincere simplicity to sustain the highly complex, which only the very best of philosophical dialogues experience. SAquinas’ willingness to find meaning in Husserl’s idea of eidetic analysis reflects SHusserl’s desire to hear what Aquinas would want to make of it. The concentration on the things themselves reveals Stein’s understanding of the practice of philosophy, which presupposes the *eidos* (allowing the interlocutors to identify essence in the first place) and also the essence (of essence, which allows them to identify essence as identical, or not, to that which the other identify it to be). What insight is gained through such an eidetic analysis is this double presupposition, of the *eidos* on the one hand and of the essence on the other, which insight it is much easier to access if it is discussed with others. Intersubjective constitution may support eidetic intuition or pose a challenge to it without either completing, exhausting, or obliterating it: talking about it calls on the *eidos* in a way that prevents totalisation. Faith contributes its own original element to intersubjective constitution, even as eidetic analysis remains a tool accessible to the individual from within his or her experience. When practised in dialogue, intersubjective eidetic variation preserves respect for the discrepancy between the *eidos* and the essence’s intersubjective constitution; the dialogue’s open-endedness, its character of being never definitively ‘over’ or ‘finished’, which constitutes such joy to friends who like to talk, testifies to this. Taking leave of the other without the questions addressed having been fully answered seems possible because any answer obtained is context dependent in the sense that the perspective of the other itself seems to be part of the answer. Community, and therefore friendship, is valuable in themselves according to Stein. Quite a good bit more valuable than particular answers clarifying any particular understanding of anything, except that some understandings of essence facilitate community and others don’t. This is the insight we can gain from the form of the dialogue, and of which it facilitates the acquisition.

## 2. An eidetic analysis of dialogue

Since we have already, in the light of the *eidos* ‘dialogue’, taken Stein’s text to be a dialogue (i.e. regarded it as an example of it), we can proceed to make an eidetic analysis of *dialogue* from it, since we need only one instantiation to analyse its essence. We shall therefore first briefly sum up its essential features as a dialogue (a) and then vary this, its essence as a dialogue, by comparison first with specific types of dialogue,

38 Ibid., 59.

ethical, pedagogical, dialectic, and therapeutic (b), and then in relation to the related intersubjective phenomena of negotiation, interrogation and interview on the one hand and to peer-pressure, seduction and manipulation, on the other (c).

### *a. The essence of the dialogue, the essence of dialogue*

To the dialogue studied, the identity of the interlocutors, the setting in which it takes place, and the purpose for which it was written are all essential. When we look for the essence of *dialogue*, which the dialogue exemplifies, we need not take these features into account, since they are not essential to it. The features listed below are, in contrast, essential to dialogue. In the example we have seen, the dialogue relies:

- 1 On the light of the *eide* directing the interlocutors towards the things themselves so that they pay attention to them, appreciate them more adequately, or gain insight into them.
- 2 On the interlocutors' ability and willingness to let themselves be so directed.
- 3 On the interlocutors having constituted their personal identity in such a manner that they can respond to each other. This response-ability places each interlocutor above social, psychological, or physical causality so that it, and sentient contagion in particular, is not allowed to undermine their personal integrity and awareness of their motivations, and thereby downgrade their responses to reactions.
- 4 On the interlocutors allowing the dialogue to unfold by proposing something for consideration, waiting for a response from the other, or providing or requesting an explanation to further the dialogue.
- 5 On the interlocutors each appreciating the perspective of the other.
- 6 On no violence or force being exerted. Each interlocutor is free to end the dialogue at any point: it is voluntary. This is not incompatible with the interlocutors feeling obliged to either initiate, enter into, cultivate, or end the dialogue and to act on the felt obligation.
- 7 On it having no results (and it having not been intended to have any) apart from mutual understanding and a deeper understanding of the things themselves, on the terms characteristic of each interlocutor. One could call these 'fruits' of the dialogue, to distinguish them from something intended and hence achieved by means of it.<sup>39</sup>

### *b. Types of dialogue*

Some dialogues are initiated *because* of the fruit they bear.<sup>40</sup> This is the case for the ethical, the pedagogical, the dialectical, and the therapeutic dialogues. Despite their purposefulness, they do not instrumentalise the dialogue in so far as it forms part of what they are. They arise from the fact that in dialogue intentions are expressed in and through language, a fact which opens the possibility of there being a discrepancy

39 Gadamer ascribes to dialogue (the deepest meaning of conversation) a result, namely that friends find themselves and each other in it and remain themselves to each other. Gadamer, "Die Unfähigkeit zum Gespräch," 211.

40 More precisely, the fruit they *might* bear.

between what is said and what is meant. We respond to expressions inadequately when we respond only to what is being said or only to what is being meant. In both cases we do not actually face up to what the other is saying. An adequate response to the expression of a sentence must respond to both what it means and to what is meant by it. In a dialogue, interlocutors check whether what is being said is what is being meant so as to be able to respond to both. If the dialogue ceases to be about something equally accessible to the interlocutors, it becomes a therapeutic dialogue or a monologue, depending on the degree of insight into the motivation of the other and ability to adjust to it in the understanding part, as well as the degree of causal submersion experienced by the less responsive part. The therapeutic dialogue attempts to bring the submerged interlocutor to insight into the discrepancy between what he is saying and what he intends, by helping him to unearth foreign causality or subconscious motives that hinder him from being motivated as he thinks he is or as he would like to be. In this way the therapeutic dialogue is intended by both interlocutors to heal an inability to dialogue.<sup>41</sup> The dialectic dialogue can accomplish some of the same work, if the one whose meaning is sought clarified is psychologically strong and morally sincere enough to respond to confrontation, since it coaxes truth out into the open by means of the principle of non-contradiction. The dialectic dialogue is more often reciprocal than the therapeutic, as the ritualised one-sidedness in the therapeutic dialogue can be helpful to protect both parties from the interference of sentient contagion. The dialectical dialogue can also be infected by sentient contagion and take on features of combat, in which case it severs its link with the things themselves. The pedagogical dialogue integrates elements from both the therapeutic and the dialectical dialogues to help the student explore the meaning of the things themselves, inclusive of all those things that might hinder her in exploring them. The pedagogue frequently confronts the student in order to build up her self-reliance and ability to test her views independently and the student questions the teacher to test the width and reliability of her wisdom. The ethical dialogue takes its point of departure in the fact that our actions (what they mean and what we mean by them) affect a shared world, and thus appear to others as meaning what we did not intend them to mean. In this, the human condition, the interlocutors are equal, so unless other factors of power are in play, the situation is not asymmetrical as in the therapeutic and the pedagogical dialogue. The ethical or political dialogue is initiated so as to consider what it would be good to do, in so far as the doing affects both interlocutors, whether directly or indirectly.<sup>42</sup>

In all of these dialogues, as in our dialogue, the interlocutors address the subject in such a way as to attempt to take the other's understanding of it into account; they present requests for clarification or attempt to meet such requests before they arise in the interest of continuing the dialogue. They all specifically address the meaning of some word or thing, so as to aid the formation of adequate concepts, or at least draw the attention of the interlocutor to differences in the conceptualisation of something.

In our dialogue the suspicion that the meaning of what is being said is not what is being meant does not arise, and its interlocutors are careful to pre-empt such suspicion by taking insightful approaches and giving adequate explanations. As the

41 Gadamer, "Die Unfähigkeit zum Gespräch," 213.

42 Peter Kemp, « le dialogue, » *Théorie de l'engagement I. Pathétique de l'engagement* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 231–235.

interlocutors are not in need of doing anything together, their dialogue is not an ethical one. Whereas SAquinas might initially appear as having some educational intent, this is only to inform SHusserl of something he needs to know in order to understand how he understands SHusserl's philosophy. Thus the dialogue is not a pedagogical one either. Nor is it a therapeutic one: The complications of unconscious motives are neither expected nor found in either of the interlocutors, although some positions show up as insufficiently motivated by the things themselves, and therefore leaving the one expressing them (either party in turn) with a question as to whether a better position could be found. As there is hardly any confrontation, characterising it as a dialectical dialogue seems superfluous. It is just a dialogue.

### *c. Neighbouring phenomena to dialogue*

Dialogue is the mode of communication typical of community. It relies on, deepens, and explores common interests and motivation in general for its meaning. It can occur because of the openness to and appreciation of the other as a subject, whose perspective on the world has relevance because it is precisely that. Openness does not mean that one interlocutor necessarily likes the other, or thinks that his worldview is justified, but it means that one lives with the fact that this is how he or she sees things, differently from oneself. The openness and acceptance of the other as other and as another subject is the reason why community is the fundamental type of intersubjectivity, which the other types, that of the *association* and that of the *mass*, can modify, and to some extent cancel, but without which they cannot, ultimately, exist.<sup>43</sup> There cannot be intersubjectivity without subjectivity, however much social and psychic causality might condition the former through the latter.

A dialogue is characterised by at least one of the interlocutors responding adequately to the other most of the time, and the other, at least some of the time, trying to respond adequately. This entails that at least one of the personal subjects constitutes himself so as to contain by integration both his will and his psyche and thereby remains free. His awareness of psychic and social causality allows him, in principle at least, openness to the motivating powers *themselves* of the things discussed *themselves*. He is, in other words, not conjuring them up out of his own will, nor giving into peer pressure in his conceptualisation of them, but is in the light of the *eide* intuiting them, however vaguely.

Where the roles of interlocutors are predetermined in a manner typical of the associational mode of intersubjectivity, conversation is likewise determined by social expectations. The conversation that occurs under such constraints may take the character of negotiation, as when the terms of a contract are discussed, or performance, as during an interview. Individual speech acts, such as raising a question, defending a procedure, asking for clarification, or criticising an idea subordinate themselves to the associational

43 Edith Stein, *Beiträge zur philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, ESGA 6, translated as *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans. Mary Catherine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki, CWES 7 (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2000). In particular, the second treatise: "Individual and Community," 129–314. Please also consult my "Study Guide to Edith Stein's *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*," *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* (2004): 40–76.

setting the telos of which is typically some type of function. The functionality of an association relies on the community it facilitates and therefore on dialogue for subjects understanding its meaning, but its efficiency, being sometimes conceived as a goal in itself, promoted as part of individuals' ambition, frequently institutes a form of speech, where the link between meaning and what is being meant is purposefully severed for the sake of the efficiency. Here the dialogue with its openness to the things themselves becomes a threat and is frequently curtailed, as power affirms itself as valuable in itself to those who identify themselves with it and legitimises their actions by reference to it. Socrates had a predilection for challenging such to dialogue, and it is in particular here that the dialectic dialogue can challenge interlocutors to return to a more adequate use of language and a greater respect for the perspectives of those who see in the light of the *eide*.

A conversation, also, may run along tracks established by psychic contagion, typical of the mass, such that emotion effectuates the outcome, often without either interlocutor being aware of what is happening. In this case, neither essences nor *eide* are regarded as meaningful in themselves, but are rather seen as arbitrary or decorative elements in a poetic result, since psychic contagion works by personal value response being overridden and without regard for agreements. In this case conversations hold their meaning, partly or entirely, from causal factors. In so far as an individual or a group has insight into the functioning of psychic or social causality and exploits it for a purpose, we can talk of seduction or manipulation. But it also happens that individuals do not understand how the psychic contagion spreads, and in this case we must speak simply of contamination and, if it is severe, of collective psychosis, spreading by means of a communication, which is neither dialogue, nor even conversation, since it is not about the things themselves, or even about a socially constructed idea.

## Conclusion

To Stein the *eidos* is the necessary presupposition for dialogue, the philosophical as well as the other forms, and is revealed in the dialogue precisely as its hidden and super-intelligible ground. It always remains a super-intelligible corrective to all of these and a reason to re-initiate dialogue about it, however well a theory to clarify it might already have been obtained. Science is dependent on this possible corrective and is for that reason never definitive.

That Heidegger would not understand this intention would not have come as a surprise to Stein. His understanding of intersubjectivity was limited to *Mitsein*, which Stein could have classified as the form of intersubjectivity which is based on psychic contagion and therefore does not consider the *eidos* as anything but an element in a poetic affirmation of power.

The possibility of dialogue is lessened to the extent that belief in intuitable, and therefore sharable, meaning is denied. If meaning itself is experienced as oppressive, dialogue is understood as a 'power game' and ceases to be. With it, also phenomenology, as a collaborative enterprise, ceases to be.

However, the *eidos* is always open to the learner. This is part of the reason why Stein begins her foreword to *Finite and Eternal Being* with the statement that it is written by a learner for co-learners. This remark is not self-deprecatory in any other sense than

Socrates' insistence that he knows nothing: it is a statement of the human subject's 'place' in relation to everything, which valorises the intersubjective setting, the meaning of which had occupied Stein in all her phenomenological works, as essential to the doctrines being developed in and through it.

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