

The Ontic–Ontological Aspects of Social Life. Edith Stein’s Approach to the Problem



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0 The issue of empathy has become one of the central fields of investigation in phe-
1 nomenology.¹ This interest in experiencing the world can be traced back to the group
2 of the early phenomenologists around Edmund Husserl, who following Husserl’s
3 lead, interpreted empathy as the fundamental act between subject and subject. The
4 most important paper in this field was written by Edith Stein, who in her doctoral the-
5 sis *On the Problem of Empathy*² 1917 was mainly concerned with Theodore Lipps’
6 psychical investigation and Husserl’s contribution to the problem of intersubjectivity. [AQ1]

7 In the interpretation of the act of empathy as a subjective act as well as the intersub-
8 jective act of the world constitution, the question is not how to differentiate between
9 the levels and layers of empathy, but, how empathy contributes to the common world
10 experience in the subject to subject relationship. In his book, *Self and Other*,³ Dan
11 Zahavi states that the relationship between the empathic act as a personal act and the
12 social act of the community life has not yet been developed. While there is consen-
13 sus on the fundamental meaning of empathy, which is the constitutional act of the
14 intersubjectivity, its connection to the social activity of the person has still not been
15 evaluated. [AQ2]
[AQ3]

16

¹ Cf. The most important current literature on this topic: Zahavi (2010, 2011, 2014), Szanto (2015), Lebeck and Gurmin (2015), Rieß (2010), Yu (2010), Beckmann-Zöllner (2006), Hackermeier (2008); etc.

² Cf. Stein (1989). Here and in all quotations I refer to the English translations of the Edith Stein editions.

³ Cf. Zahavi (2014).

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17 Does empathy necessarily entail that an observer *feels* the same emotion that he detects in
 18 an other person? Does empathy preserve or abolish the difference between self and other?
 19 People disagree about the role of sharing, and caring, and imagination in empathy, just as
 20 they disagree about the relation between empathy and social cognition in general.⁴

21 From the beginning of his book, Zahavi emphasizes that the cognition of the self
 22 coexists with the constitution of the self; that is, the self's world experience and self-
 23 experience coincide in the personal act of empathy. Therefore, the empathic world
 24 constitution of the self and the self experiences coincide in the narrative expression
 25 of the personal history.⁵

26 Similarly, Stein argues that the individual world experience will be personally
 27 identified in the intersubjective act of empathy (cf. *On the Problem of Empathy*,
 28 III. The Constitution of the Psycho-Physical Individual, §5e–f). On this point, Stein
 29 claims that the act of empathy in the subject–subject relationship conceals the ongo-
 30 ing constitutional act of the self and its experiences. In *Ideas I*,⁶ Husserl distinguishes
 31 the two sides of the experiences as the noesis and noema, which are the internal and
 32 external elements of the constituted ontology of the mind and the constitutive material
 33 of the spatial or ontical world. These two poles of experiencing the world, the noesis
 34 as the internal constitution of the thing [Gegenstand] and the noema as the constituted
 35 thing, compose the two components of the experiences of the self. Husserl elucidates
 36 here further, on how the world experiences can be constituted ontologically by these
 37 two components of the noesis–noema correlation (cf. §§19). Stein keeps the Husser-
 38 lian noetic in mind when elaborating on the problem of empathy, which she extends
 39 to the question of social activity in her doctoral dissertation in which she developed
 40 the relationship between empathy and self-experience, but she first uses the term
 41 “social act“ in *Individual and Community* 1922.⁷ Focusing on Stein's interpretation
 42 of empathy, which, in her understanding is the founding act of intersubjective world
 43 constitution, I would like to investigate how Stein's ontology of consciousness in
 44 *Individual and Community* predated communal ontology, that is how the constituted
 45 world based on empathy provides the foundations for the ontology of social life.

46 She was already concerned about the issue of social life in her first published
 47 work, *On the Problem of Empathy*, which is, the life that is outside of the private
 48 sphere of the individual but which belongs to it (cf. the last chapter of *On the Problem*
 49 *of Empathy*: IV. Empathy as the Understanding of Spiritual Persons). While Stein
 50 investigates the act of empathy as a personal act and connects it with the social inter-
 51 action of the individual, she tries to describe the relationship of the individuals to their
 52 community and takes the example from Dilthey's philosophy of life [Weltanschau-
 53 ung]. In Stein's account, the empathic encounter with the other creates the individual
 54 type of the other, which contains her personal value system. (cf. IV/§7b, Personal
 55 Types and the Conditions of the Possibility of Empathy With Persons). On this point,

⁴Zahavi (2014, 101).

⁵Cf. Zahavi (2014, 13, 55–58, 204), etc.

⁶Cf. Husserl (1977).

⁷Cf. Stein (2000a).

56 she discusses Dilthey’s *Introduction to the Human Sciences*⁸ and *The construction of*
 57 *the historical World in the human sciences*⁹ and asserts that the personal/individual
 58 philosophy of life [Weltanschauung] is a fundamental component in the connection
 59 between individual and community.¹⁰ According to Dilthey, the individual and the
 60 community are in internal correlation with each other; that is, individual ability can
 61 be expressed only in the community and a community, which is constituted by the
 62 individuals, exists due to the individuals; therefore, the community and the individual
 63 are mutually dependent on each other (cf. Dilthey’s statement elsewhere about the
 64 interdependency between the theory of the humanities and the social sciences, which
 65 constitutes the social historical reality.¹¹ According to Dilthey’s work, Hans Ulrich
 66 Lessing emphasizes the “double role” of the individual in social life: on the one hand,
 67 the individual is an integral element of the social reality, while on the other hand
 68 the individual is the theoretical subject of the science examining this reality).¹² This
 69 aspect of the interdependence between community and individuality was accepted by
 70 Stein as well, in fact, it was what her thinking about the community was based upon.
 71 In the second part of *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*¹³ [*Beiträge zur*
 72 *philosophischen Begründung der Psychologie und der Geisteswissenschaften*, ESGA
 73 6], Stein systematically and methodologically improves Dilthey’s thesis about the
 74 community, namely that the community in its history is determined by individu-
 75 als. In Stein’s view, the community exists as an ontic reality, which is an analogue
 76 existence to the individual personality. Contrary to Dilthey, Stein did not focus on
 77 the historical and temporal aspects of communal life, but directed the investigation
 78 on the present situation and experiences of individual life, which have a temporal
 79 character within community life. Like Dilthey, Stein recognizes that the ontology
 80 of the spirit corresponds to the ontology of nature. This ontology of the spirit is the
 81 essential structure for the historical revealing of personalities.¹⁴ Every sensation is
 82 individually determined, and the community can only be described by individual
 83 experiences; its temporal life is conditioned by the variability of individuals.

84 Although Stein does not articulate it directly, the definition of the community as
 85 temporally determined phenomena conceals a narrative connection between individ-
 86 ual and community life. The concentric relationship between the communal and the
 87 individual induces the mutual influence of the two; that is, the community had an
 88 influence on the individual as well. All the while, it is directed not only individually

⁸Dilthey (1923).

⁹Dilthey (1927).

¹⁰To Edith Stein’s contribution to Dilthey see also Jani (2015a, b).

¹¹Cf. Dilthey (1923). *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, GSch I., 95.

¹²Cf. Lessing (2001, 110).

¹³Stein (2000b).

¹⁴Cf. Stein (1989, 95): “As natural things have an essential underlying structure, such as the fact that empirical spatial forms are realizations of ideal geometric forms, so there is also an essential structure of the spirit and of ideal types. Historical personalities are empirical realizations of these types. If empathy is the perceptual consciousness in which foreign persons come to givenness for us, then it is also the exemplary basis for obtaining this ideal type, just as natural perception is the basis for the eidetic knowledge of nature”.

89 but has its own identity. However, this identity is individually defined. This entails a
 90 relationship between the individual and the communal, characterized by the relation-
 91 ship between the personal and the social life of the individual. The analogue links
 92 of the individual and the communal, and the personal and the social life are the two
 93 poles of the “personal I” and the “pure I”. According to Zahavi, the personal I is
 94 by origin open towards social life; that is, the ability for life in a community is a
 95 pre-given in the personal life experience.

96 Husserl consequently holds that the personal I has its origin in the social life. Persons have
 97 abilities, dispositions, habits, interests, character traits, and convictions, but persons do not
 98 exist in a social vacuum. To exist as a person is to exist socialized into a social horizon,
 99 where one’s bearing to oneself is appropriated from the others.¹⁵

100 The radical interpretation of the relationship between the individual and the com-
 101 munal implies that the personal experience of the social life is intellectually accom-
 102 plished, and the communal life [Gemeinschaftsleben] obtains a definition only indi-
 103 vidualy. Stein’s question, which she addresses in *Individual and Community*, is, what
 104 do we understand by “social life”, and, whether the social act exists independently
 105 from the individual act of empathy.

106 In order to elaborate on this problem, she distinguishing two questions: (a) The
 107 Community as a Reality: Its Ontic composition; (b) The Fundamental Relationship
 108 between Individual and Community.¹⁶

109 In the concluding chapter of *On the Problem of Empathy* (Empathy as the Under-
 110 standing of Spiritual Persons), Stein explores the individual’s value choices. These
 111 are individually constituted in the act of empathy and are influenced by the value
 112 choices of the other individuals. One can experience the “homo religiosus” of the
 113 other empathically, despite the exact meaning of religious faith being essentially
 114 alien to him.¹⁷ Stein uses this example to conclude her study on empathy, but this
 115 example also raised the problem of communal experiences. Whereas religion is the
 116 personal conviction of the individual, an individual philosophy of life, it also belongs
 117 to a community and participation in the community’s life. As long as the personal
 118 individual observes the religious life as an outsider, she is not part of the commu-
 119 nity life, she does not have any practical experience about life in the community.
 120 While the individual experience creates an ontological background for personal life,
 121 which is also part of the community, there is also an ontical aspect of the community,
 122 which is the source of experience for the individual, which is part of the community
 123 ontology but not of the personal ontology. Employing Stein’s two-step value inter-
 124 pretation, I will evaluate how this transition from the experience of the ontical world
 125 constitutes the ontological aspect of the communal life in the individual, and how
 126 the individual life experience—that is, the substance of the ontology of the personal
 127 life—contributes to the social ontology of the community.

¹⁵Zahavi (2014, 81).

¹⁶Cf. Stein (2000a, chap. II).

¹⁷Cf. Stein (1989, 117).

128 **The Community as a Reality: Its Ontic Composition**

129 While in her first work on empathy Stein investigates how the act of empathy as
 130 a personal act relates to the experiences of the community and how the personal
 131 value becomes a communal value, in her study, entitled *Individual and Community*,
 132 she investigates the common ontological background of the individual and the com-
 133 munity. According to Stein’s thesis, in terms of individuality, the community is an
 134 ontical reality which is independent of the individual life, and the community is an
 135 experience of the spatial world for the individual life. At the beginning of the second
 136 chapter of the study, she introduces the real life of the community as a life that is
 137 intertwined with individual life. Communities are “out there in life” on the one hand,

138 ...but we find them *within us* as well, for we live as their members. [...] Epistemological
 139 investigation will probably make it clear that, for knowledge of the community just as for
 140 knowledge of the individual personality, “outer” and “inner” observations are interwoven.¹⁸

141 Both the individual and the community have an internal and an external or objec-
 142 tive front, which are naturally able to transform into each other and the properties
 143 of the individual and the community are in analogue relationship to one another.
 144 Such internal elements as the lifepower [Lebenskraft], the psyche and the soul are
 145 possessed both by the individual and the community, and the individual and the com-
 146 munity have an internal correlation to their objectivity. The objective appearance of
 147 both is constituted by their values. In this regard, the question is how the individual
 148 value system relates to common values; that is, whether the individual values are
 149 constituted by the communal values or vice versa?

150 In *Individual and Community*, Stein examined social life from an objective point
 151 of view, which presupposes an independent life for the community, but describes it as
 152 being an entity that is dependent on the individual. According to this interpretation,
 153 the autonomy of the community and its ontology, too, becomes very problematic.
 154 Szanto highlights the problem of the super-individuality of the community in the
 155 respect that Stein’s understanding of the super-individual might be counterproduc-
 156 tive, if the experiences of the super-individual are not interpreted on the horizon of
 157 the shared emotions of the individuality, that is, if the communal experiences are
 158 not fulfilled on the field of the spatio-temporality, e.g. on the field of the bodily
 159 experiences.¹⁹ Szanto differentiates between shared and collective emotions, and his
 160 argument may be appropriate in relation to Stein, in so far as he claims that the indi-
 161 viduals mutually share the same emotional experience at a given time, if A and B,
 162 each respectively, partake in a convergent phenomenal. Contrary to shared emotions,
 163 members of a group have collective emotions, if there is a “shared emotional culture”
 164 with a robust evaluative and normative appraisal pattern.²⁰

165 Although Stein does not make this distinction between shared emotion and collec-
 166 tive emotion, a structural differentiation appears in the relationship of the community

¹⁸Stein (2000b, 197).

¹⁹Szanto (2015, 510).

²⁰Ibid. 511.

167 and the individual. In Stein's interpretation of community, the lifepower of the com-
 168 munity is not separable from the physical effects of the individuals and thus can be
 169 described without taking the individual's internal life into account. It seems that the
 170 community has an independent lifepower [Lebenskraft], which is not displayed by
 171 the individual psyche but has an effect on the individual historically. Stein asserts
 172 that

173 ...if we consider the life of a nation as it stands before the eyes of the historian, then we have
 174 an ascent up to a summit of development and then a descent and extinction. By this we do
 175 not mean the blooming of properties and abilities, which manifests the same process. Rather
 176 we mean an increase and a decrease of the very power that makes possible the development
 177 of the single abilities and comes to expression in it.²¹

178 This mental lifepower [geistige Lebenskraft] of the community

179 ...belongs to the area of purely physical, or biological, development, and may very well have
 180 a significance to the sentient lifepower – in [the notion of] the physical, we're presupposing
 181 one of the sources from which lifepower is charged up – but it has got nothing to do with
 182 the life of the psyche itself in the first place.²²

183 Apart from this mental lifepower, which characterizes the community life objectively
 184 and has nothing to do with the internal constituents of it, the psychological lifepower
 185 [psychische Lebenskraft] of the community demonstrates the inner connection with
 186 the individual life. The psychological or sentient [sinnliche] lifepower of the community
 187 appears in the totality of psychological acts of psycho-physical individuals.

188 However, the roots of the psychological lifepower of the community are to be found in
 189 the psychological individuals, and the individuals remain in a twofold relationship with
 190 the mental lifepower of the community.

191 To start with, we know, that the lifepower of the community doesn't exist independently and
 192 alongside of its components, but rather coalesces from the power of the single [members].
 193 However the individuals do not contribute their full, undivided power into the community,
 194 but [contribute] only insofar as they are living *as* members of the community. Each one
 195 retains certain "reserves" for his or her individual living. And besides, keep in mind that
 196 each individual belongs to a whole range of communities, to which the individual distributes
 197 his or her power and which accordingly lay claim to the individual in very different degrees.²³

198 From the view of the individual, the internal relationship between the communal life
 199 and the individual life is a circular one, in which the communal life is a part of the
 200 individual life, and the individual's own share of the community contributes to the
 201 understanding of the individual's personal life.

202 Apart from the question of whether the mental lifepower of the communal life
 203 is independent of the individual, there is a more significant problem, which also
 204 provides an answer to the previous question, namely the problem of how the indi-
 205 viduals transfer the power between each other. Szanto illustrates this problem of the
 206 emotional transition between the individual and the communal by the introduction

²¹Stein (2000b, 201).

²²Ibid. 202.

²³Ibid. 203.

207 of the two poles of the empathic act.²⁴ However, Stein never distinguishes between a
 208 social and a communal act of empathy, she emphasizes that the act of empathy leads
 209 the individual to the field of individuality. While Stein deals with the social aspect
 210 of the act of empathy and emphasizes that it is empathy that makes intersubjective
 211 experience possible in her doctoral dissertation, she avoids finding a solution for
 212 the problem of social experience through the act of empathy. In Stein’s definition
 213 of the community life, she constrains the act of empathy to the subject–subject and
 214 to the subject–community relationship and points out, that the participation in the
 215 community life assumes a share in communal lifepower. According to Szanto as well
 216 as Stein, the individual relates to the community as to the *We* of the plurality of the
 217 individuals. The super-individual *We* of the community consists of co-experienced
 218 members of the community or of the plurality of the subjects.²⁵ The act of empathy
 219 cannot overstep the *self and other* or *self and community* relationship. This means
 220 the question is not whether the subject relates to the *We* or to the multitude of *I*s in
 221 the community, as it would to another *I*, but whether the social act of the multitude
 222 or multiplication of selves exists. That is, whether there is an act of the common
 223 meaning, feeling and acting, a community act, which in the common action does not
 224 distinguish the self from the other.

225 At this point we’re led to a question that’s of the greatest significance for the transfer of power
 226 from the individual to the other, the arc of sentient causality beyond the individual psyche.
 227 It’s the question of whether one individual really can be rendered capable of achievements
 228 that exceed his own power through the influx of powers not his own, or whether what’s going
 229 on in what we’re calling a transfer is nothing more than a freeing up his own power.²⁶

230 However, Stein emphasizes in her writing on empathy that the act of empathy is the
 231 fundamental interpersonal act, which makes the connection between the individuals
 232 possible, and it must be clarified whether the individual contribution to the personal
 233 experiences is at the same time a communal process as well; that is, whether the
 234 community influences the individual in any way or, rather, the communal life exists
 235 in the individual mind.

236 In *Self and Other*, Zahavi states that there is a fundamental relationship between
 237 the experimental selfhood and the self-consciousness. This dichotomy of the con-
 238 sciousness of the self and the self-consciousness dissolve in the Husserlian notion
 239 about the protention, primal-impression and retention of the temporality, and it
 240 reveals the origin of the personal I in the social life from the first person perspec-
 241 tive.²⁷ As Edith Stein indicates, the “power transfer” [Kraftübertragung] is a special
 242 mental function, and it “is possible only with an ‘openness’ of the individual for an

²⁴Cf. Szanto (2015, 522): “With this in mind, consider first the membership misidentification problem. With individual-to-group and intragroup—or *social empathy*—and group to member—or *collective empathy*—properly functioning various misidentifications concerning experiential or emotional sharing might be corrected”.

²⁵Ibid. 507.

²⁶Stein (2000b, 204).

²⁷Zahavi (2014, 64): “The retentive process consequently not only enables us to experience an enduring temporal object; it does not merely enable the constitution of the identity of an object in a manifold of temporal phases; it also provides us with a non-observational, pre-reflective,

243 other”.²⁸ Stein is aware that the communal life becomes conscious mentally, and the
 244 mental awareness presupposes the psychical lifepower [psychische Lebenskraft] of
 245 the community life. Stein offers the following example:

246 So an artistically gifted human being who doesn’t lack for contact with art or “opportunity”
 247 for aesthetic experiences may remain entirely unproductive as long as he is left to himself,
 248 but may be rendered capable of creative deeds as soon as he falls in with a circle of real
 249 live artists. So it is they - above and beyond the opportune causal conditioning under which
 250 an individual stands - who are co-responsible for his personal development, for that which
 251 unfolds from his original predispositions.²⁹

252 This example quite clearly proves the ontical aspect of the community. In the first
 253 case, the “artistically gifted human being” is aware of the existence of art but she
 254 does not participate in the artistic action. The situation is analogous to the outside
 255 observation of a community—e.g. to a religious group—when the individual is not
 256 part of it. It is able to describe the community life from outside, but it does not auto-
 257 matically mean that the individual can participate in its inner life. In the second case,
 258 the direct artistic milieu makes the artistical deeds possible. The environment should
 259 be conceived as acting together, as a common ontological acquirement of a commu-
 260 nity, which cannot be perceived as a close social influence (e.g. a family) but has an
 261 indirect influence on the talented person. The personal contact with the community
 262 presupposes a similar openness of the person. According to Stein’s example,

263 The family that I come from and the community of scientific work that I join are two
 264 communities that as such have nothing at all to do with one another, do not know one
 265 another know nothing about one another, and exert no direct impact upon one another. But
 266 through my mediation a causal bond can be established between them. When power pours
 267 into me from the one, I can feed it into the other.³⁰

268 Szanto’s distinction of the shared emotion and the collective emotion make the inter-
 269 nal life of the community visible: Sharing is both the empathic act in subject–subject
 270 relationship and being the fundamental act of community life.

271 In shared emotions, this is a supra-individual intentional object or values. Supra-individual
 272 intentional objects of shared emotions are not simply public objects but, rather, must be
 273 apperceived under the same intentional mode, i.e., *as* shared, and targeted as having the
 274 same emotional import for me as for others. Thus, they are not supra-individual simply
 275 because they are shared but because they are targeted and experienced as shared.³¹

276 At this point, the question of how the experience of the communal becomes the
 277 experience of the individual arises; that is, how the communal value judgement
 278 influences the individual one.

temporally extended self-consciousness. This is why Husserl’s account of the structure of inner
 time-consciousness (pretention-primal impression-protention) must be understood as an analysis
 of the (micro)-structure of first-personal givenness”.

²⁸Cf. Stein (2000a, 205).

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid. 207.

³¹Szanto (2015, 507).

279 **The Fundamental Relationship Between Individual** 280 **and Community**

281 In Stein’s most significant reflection regarding the problem of individual experience
282 and communal experience, she employs the example of family life which is the
283 narrowest field of social life. Stein claims that leaving the closest community life,
284 the family or closer social environment leads to the transition from the subjective
285 mental life [subjektives geistiges Leben] to an objective mental life.

286 Obviously, here we’ve made our way out of the sphere of the “subjective” mind [subjektiver
287 Geist] and into that of the “objective” mind. From this sphere flow powers for mental living,
288 without its being depleted or even diminished in its effective power. In our case, it was
289 apparently subjective mental life that became “objective” in that it was captured in the form
290 of logical significances. Whether and how such a becoming-objective is possible – that’s a
291 new problem.³²

292 By supplying power to the other, the individual’s own state of life is transferred to the
293 other. In *On the Problem of Empathy*, Stein emphasizes that there is a fundamental
294 difference between body [Leib] and corpus [Körper] by their sensation in the spatial
295 world. She names every unmoving and unliving thing corpus, and the experience of
296 the other in the terms of the material object of the experience. The living body is
297 always both the experienced object of the spatial world and it is also the sentient
298 body of the personal I. According to Stein, the body has a twofold constitution as a
299 sentient body and as the experienced corpus of the spatial world, and it gets its place
300 in the space in this twofold condition.³³

301 It is the zero point of the orientation,³⁴ which contributes, according to Stein, to
302 the locational awareness of the individual, as well as having a fundamental role in
303 the world constitution of the self.

304 Based on Husserl, Zahavi highlights the ambiguity of the bodily experiences.
305 While the body of the other is intuitively available to me, the experiences of the other
306 are not.

307 They can never be given to me in the same original fashion as my own experiences; they
308 are not accessible to me in inner consciousness. Rather, they are appresented through a
309 special form of presentation, or, to use a different terminology, they are co-intended and
310 characterized by a certain co-presence.³⁵

311 As the empathic I considers the body of the other as a sensual body, it obtains a new
312 orientation and a new image of the spatial world. Stein claims that the sensation of
313 the other transform the subject, who has feelings, to a subject, who fulfils acts.³⁶
314 This social body [sozialer Leib], which participates by the act of empathy in the

³²Stein (2000a, 209).

³³Cf. Stein (1989): III/§4a, The Givenness of the Living Body.

³⁴Cf. Stein *On the Problem of Empathy*, III/§5d. The Foreign Living Body as the Center of Orientation of the Spatial World 61.

³⁵Zahavi (2014, 126).

³⁶Cf. Stein (1989, 62): “A sensing subject has become one which carries out acts”.

intersubjective world constitution, is the outside appearance of the individual life that completely fits into the medium of the community life. The transfer [Übertragung] of the own power to the other circulates throughout the social body, in virtue of the ability of the individual to become engaged with the other directly or indirectly. The artistically talented person, who has no real contact with the life of art, is socially not different from her artistically not gifted fellows. In this way, the social body is what realizes the transfer between the individuals, what makes the general communal judgement possible. This is similar to the communal life: the individual is able to perceive the communal life, but she will not automatically be a part of it. The participation in the communal life depends on the acceptance of the common values shared by the community. In the case of the artistically gifted person, it is important not only to detect the own talent but to participate in the communal life by the person's own action. The action in a community, e.g. the action of the artistically gifted person is not simply the sharing of values in the community life and also not merely the acceptance of values of the community life, but the two together: in the consciousness of the common values and the acting upon these values. Whereas the act of empathy can be defined as a one-way act, individual–individual, or individual–community relationship, the common act or social act is directed towards the other in respect of the common values.

However, social life is a pre-given ability of the individual, and her social body must be transformed to the communal life. According to Stein, turning from exchanging of experiences individually to the participation in the community life entails a mental transformation.

Exchanges between individuals are effected for the most part in “social acts” in which the one [act] is pointed at the other, turned toward it. One is speaking and the other is understanding him. And it belongs to the sense of these acts that the material content pronounced, and accordingly heard, is not only *meant* but also *imparted* and *received*. This reciprocal linkage enters into the experimental content too. Where you're just dealing with a transmission of material content, the direction toward the other ego that indwells the experience meets up with that ego not as a private personality of determinate qualities of its own, but purely as an understanding ego.³⁷

According to the main statement of Stein, there is a difference between the intended content of the expression and the real content of it. Stein points out that the communal act operates with a pre-given content of materials; that is, an established ontology identifies the community life. Contrary to the shared emotions in the act of empathy, where the experience of the other is a non-original experience of me, the social act of the community distributes the experiences of the community life by the specific common ontological field of the community. This means that, although the community contains a group of individuals, in other words it is a multitude of single subjects, it still constitutes a coherent super-individual, which overwrites and influences the decisions of the individuals. (We use the words “members” and “membership” in the everyday life without reflection on the contrastive meaning of the two. While members are always members of a community, the membership means the participation

³⁷Stein (2000a, 210).

358 in the community life.) For the notions of individual and super-individual differ from
 359 each other in the act process. While the act of empathy induces a one-way relation-
 360 ship between individuals in which they mutually affect one another, the social act is a
 361 two-poled act that is, on one hand, directed towards the other and, on the other hand,
 362 directed towards the shared field of meaning. Stein is concerned with the transition
 363 from the subjective mind to the objective one from the point of view of the individual
 364 experience that is always part of the community life. As she claims in her book on
 365 empathy, the development of the individual presupposes the contact with the other.
 366 In this contact, during the action with the other, the personal value judgement of the
 367 individual and her relationship to the value judgement of the community appears.

368 Stein describes this value choice of the individual as its first engagement with
 369 the communal life.³⁸ In *Individual and Community*, Stein demonstrates, where the
 370 real connection between the community and the individual originates from, while
 371 linking the essence of value judgement to the spiritual character of the individual.
 372 Despite Stein using a new analogy about communal life, the concept of the communal
 373 soul is deeply problematic. Similarly to the psyche and the lifepower, which have
 374 two different meanings in the individual and the social life, the soul too has an
 375 individual and a communal form. This static core appears in the value judgement of
 376 the individual and reveals the individual in its own personality.

377 For every attitude is an attitude toward something and holds true for something objective that
 378 must be apprehended in some way or other. So we see, the answer is *values*: values that are
 379 inseparably bound up with the being of the person. As I take a positive or a negative stance
 380 toward a person, she stands before my eyes as valued as disvalue d. This is not to deny that
 381 I can find fault with a person whom I love or find merits in a person whom I hate.³⁹

382 Stein uses a quite broad interpretation for meaning of values. For her, history, per-
 383 sonal ideas and the relationship to the other all belong under the category of values.
 384 The person is defined by Stein as a “value-tropic” being [werthhaftes Sein], who is
 385 responsible for her values, and her properties appear through her value choices. “We
 386 see what the person *is* when we see which world of value she lives in, which values
 387 she is responsive to, and what achievements she may be creating, prompted by val-
 388 ues”.⁴⁰ According to Stein, the personal core of the individual reveals itself by the
 389 choice of the values; that is, the spiritual life of the person is objectified in virtue of
 390 her value choices. “Then your *soul* opens itself, with that which is proper to it when
 391 it’s at home with itself: the world of value”.⁴¹ Thereby the personal value judgement
 392 is the external appearance of the individual ontology, it is bounded to the individual.
 393 And while the soul of the individual manifests itself in these value choices, the values

³⁸Cf. Stein (1989, 109): “As my own person is constituted in primordial spiritual acts, so the foreign person is constituted in empathically experienced acts. I experience his every action as proceeding from a will and this in turn, from a feeling. Simultaneously with this, I am given a level of his person and a range of values in principle experienceable by him. This, in turn, meaningfully motivates the expectation of future possible volitions and actions”.

³⁹Stein (2000b, 212).

⁴⁰Ibid. 227.

⁴¹See Foot note (40).

394 themselves are independent from the personal life. It is thus clear how the soul is
 395 involved in the value judgement of the personal life, and how it would be reflected
 396 by these values, but the question is how this personal aspect can become visible in
 397 the community through its individual members.

398 Stein claims that the personal values are independent from their carriers, their
 399 existence does not depend on the person, but rather they are objective.

400 Since the character properties are abilities for value experiences and value-determined man-
 401 ners of behavior, they don't themselves belong to your soul or to the core of your person.
 402 Yet in them, the core blooms outward. And they allow what inwardly fills up your soul to
 403 become visible.⁴²

404 In *On the Problem of Empathy*, she emphasizes that the value choice of the individual
 405 shows the typical character of the I.⁴³ It is by her value choices that that the person
 406 within the individual can be understood in the act of empathy. According to this
 407 formulation, the individual and the value are related to each other in a twofold way:
 408 on the one hand, values are created by the person, their existence depends on the
 409 choice of values on the other hand, they are independent from the personal individual
 410 and are available to everyone. This world of values [Wertewelt], in which the person
 411 lives, is the key to the connection between the individual and the community life.
 412 While the individual value system refers to the individual ontology of a person, the
 413 value choice of the community manifests itself in the variety of ontologies

414 ... we see this value not merely in the modification of the individual persons and their possible
 415 accommodation to a more highly valued type, but rather in the release of the individuals from
 416 their natural loneliness, and in the new super-individual personality [überindividuellen Pers-
 417 sönlichkeit] that unites in itself the powers [die Kräfte] and abilities of the discrete [members],
 418 turns them into its own functions, and through this synthesis can produce achievements.⁴⁴

419 This super-individual personality [überindividuelle Persönlichkeit], which is the car-
 420 rier of the higher values of the community, is not different in its actions from a per-
 421 sonal activity, as Szanto formulates: they stay in the same intentional mode; however,
 422 this activity is regarded as independent from the members of the community.⁴⁵

423 The objective appearance of the community is confined to a pure activity. So
 424 the communal life has an internal lifestyle, the sharing in the act of empathy, and
 425 an external front in the form of the activity, which is directed towards a common
 426 normativity, history and value system. A vivid example cited by Stein is the stories
 427 about family life that have different meanings for the closest community, for the
 428 friends, and for the official environment.

429

⁴²Stein (2000b, 231).

⁴³Cf. Stein (1989): IV/§7b, Personal Types and the Condition of the Possibility of Empathy with Persons.

⁴⁴Stein (2000a, 273).

⁴⁵Cf. Szanto (2015, 507).

430 If I project a vivid image of my family to the circle of friends, among whom I dwell, if I
 431 describe the vigor and activeness that prevail there, then everyone who hears my words can
 432 be brushed by a breath of fresh air as a refreshing and invigorating breeze wafts out from
 433 what I’m describing. Here, I’m not in any way a “mediator” of the effect as in the case of
 434 the causal series. The effect that my words help to call forth doesn’t need to go through me.
 435 It can take place [even] if I have apprehended the vigor I’m describing as a cold observer,
 436 without being seized by it myself in any way, or if the impact that I originally underwent is
 437 long gone at the point in time at which I am speaking.⁴⁶

438 The example reveals how differently one expresses oneself in a closer friendship
 439 and in an official environment. Focusing on the value carried by [Tragen] of both the
 440 individual and the community, we have found that values are the connecting elements
 441 between the individual and the community. The friendship and the family are bound
 442 together by a historically determined coherent value system; that is, the members
 443 of the community are aware of their common mental lifepower. This awareness
 444 of the mental lifepower leads to the building of a common value system; that is,
 445 the members obtain the values of the community not by the personal sharing of
 446 the other, but by the active participation in the community life. This activity of
 447 the community is based on the common ontology of the community. According to
 448 Zahavi, that the narrative identity of the self is deeply embedded into a larger historical
 449 and communal meaning-giving structure,⁴⁷ which has a temporal relationship to the
 450 whole life, the community life also has a super-individual narration about its present
 451 life, and a narrative reflection on its history. Although community life and the life
 452 of the individual become intertwined in the act of empathy, empathy remains on
 453 the level of distinction between of the other and the I. While in the act of empathy,
 454 the individual gets a personal reflection of himself from the other’s perspective;
 455 that is, the individual see himself from the viewpoint of the other, the social act
 456 is directed not towards the other but towards a common values of the community
 457 life. This means the individual gains a new perspective on her life from the point of
 458 view of community life. The temporality of the community partly contributes to the
 459 individual’s temporal dimension, but the subject’s own, internal relationship to the
 460 community life separates this shared temporality in the personal narrative. According
 461 to Stein, the transition from the individual value system to the community relieves
 462 the individual of the spiritual weight of the decision and makes him free to engage
 463 in communal activity. That is, the values of the communal are not of the individual,
 464 but they provide orientation for the personal scale of values, they are the source of
 465 the personal value system.

466 Therefore, there is a mutual transition between the individual and the communal
 467 by the act of empathy: during the exchanging of experiences, the individual not only
 468 receives a new point of orientation from the other, but in the social act the individual
 469 reflects on the common ties.

470

⁴⁶Cf. Stein (2000b, 208).

⁴⁷Cf. Zahavi (2014, 55).

471 Social life is performance art, a technique for liberating yourself from the weight of existence.
 472 It is never said that anyone who belongs to “polite society” must go in for social life. Social
 473 living is built up more on the foundation of an underground, untamed, and uncurtailed life.
 474 And under the surface of theatrical and stylized human relationships, a maze of primitive
 475 and naive relationships crisscrosses: relationships that would be impossible inside of “polite
 476 society”.⁴⁸

477 While the communal life is confined to the activity based on common values, the
 478 exchange of personal values is achieved through the search for a shared point of
 479 orientation, that is to say, the personal value judgement prepares the individual for
 480 the participation in community life. In a closer interpretation of Stein, this means that
 481 the individual is able to participate actively in the community and the community
 482 thereby builds a social ontology around the individual, but this ontology constitutes
 483 only a part of the individual life; that is, the individual ontology exists in the diverse
 484 ontologies of the community.

485 Conclusion

486 In Stein’s interpretation, the ontic and ontological features of the social life are
 487 revealed in the twofold relationship to the community, as an objective entity of the
 488 outside world and a subjective internal life of the multitudes of individuals. Stein
 489 describes the two sides of community life through the act of empathy, which is the act
 490 that fundamentally constitutes the intersubjective world. She differentiates between
 491 the act of empathy and the social act of the community life and claims that the life of
 492 the community oversteps the empathic subject–subject relationship by the common
 493 action of the multitude of individuals. This entail that the act of empathy and the
 494 social act differ in their direction: Both in the subject–subject relationship, as in the
 495 subject–community relationship, the act of empathy is directed to the other, and the
 496 one facing me is considered as the other. Contrary to this, the social act is not a one
 497 pole act, whose direction could be defined by the experience of the other, but it is
 498 directed once to the other and once to the common value system of the community.
 499 Thus, the community life regards the other as the common feature of the self, it
 500 interprets the social actions of the other as the actions of the self, the actions of the
 501 common *We*. In relation to this aspect of communal life, Stein introduces the notion
 502 of the social body.

503 Stein sees the connection between the community life and the individual life in
 504 the value apprehension of the two. While community life occurs in the mental and
 505 spiritual act of sharing values, the way in which individual values become communal
 506 values is significant. Here, Stein emphasizes the individual and the super-individual
 507 or independent feature of the values, which relate to each other in the common
 508 temporal dimension of the action. As the individual becomes aware of her personal
 509 values, she also transfers the practice of these values into community life. However,

⁴⁸Stein (2000b, 290).

510 while the individual belongs to a number of the communities, the connection between
 511 these, through value choices, create the ontological field for the community as such.
 512 The individual’s choice of communal values occurs individually though the narrative
 513 identity.

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