

Francesco, Alfieri. *Die Rezeption Edith Steins: Internationale Edith-Stein-Bibliographie 1942–2012. Festgabe für M. Amata Neyer OCD*. Preface U. Dobhan OCD. Foreword H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz & A. Ales Bello. Introduction F. Alfieri OFM. Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2012. 513 pp.

This is the first up-to-date bibliography of Edith Stein's work, presented by the author, Francesco Alfieri, at the Cologne Carmel on 22 April 2012. This book is dedicated to Sister Maria Amata Neyer on her 90th birthday, and its publication coincides with the 70th anniversary of Edith Stein's death in 1942. It offers a list of all the books published in German and subsequently in other languages, based on the new edition of Edith Stein's works (ESGA). After a short biography of Edith Stein (55–58),¹ there is a list of Stein's works: both the first editions of her works in German (ESW) and all the translations into other languages which are based on the German original.

The numerous items of the secondary bibliography are divided into years, and the titles are ordered alphabetically. It includes monographs and articles on Stein, as well as reviews of her works. No less than 2,855 items are detailed in Alfieri's monumental volume, affording a view of what is available on Edith Stein. Alfieri starts with the first reference to Edith Stein's work by Husserl in 1919, and places her under the rubric of "phenomenological realism" and modern metaphysics in general.² Where necessary, Alfieri also adds <in brackets> explanations or suggestions for further analyses. Where possible the ISSN and ISBN references are also given to afford easy access to the works listed in this book. All the texts concerning Edith Stein have been consulted by Alfieri during his many trips to the *Husserl-Archiv* in Leuven, the *Edith-Stein-Archiv* in Cologne, the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* in Munich, *The World Phenomenology Institute* in Vermont, U.S.A., the *Thomas-Institut* in Cologne, and the many libraries all over Europe, in Paris, Ruzomberok (Slovakia), or Rome.³

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all parenthetical page citations are to this book, in my translation.

² Husserl is the first to refer to Stein's work. Early in 1919 he recommended her Habilitation, which later appeared in Herbstrith 1983. (For the reference to Herbstrith and to the Italian version, see 96–97).

³ Alfieri mentions the original location of Stein's writings in the Husserl-Archiv in Leuven and their removal to the Edith-Stein-Archiv in the Carmelite monastery at

This huge project is based on the comprehensive research of Francesco Alfieri, a phenomenologist of the school of Rome, currently under the leadership of Prof. Angela Ales Bello. The focus is on Stein's links to medieval philosophy and specifically to Duns Scotus, on whom Alfieri himself has written detailed studies (2011a, 2011b). Alfieri's work is far from being a technical listing of Stein's works and the secondary literature on her. Rather, the readers are given a priceless tool to fulfill what according to Sister Maria Amata Neyer is a prerequisite for understanding Stein's work: the understanding of the person within a research community. Alfieri cites Sister Neyer: "In order to be able to achieve a profound understanding of Edith Stein's thinking, one must incessantly consider that her studies were conducted within a community. This aspect will be helpful in understanding the multi-layeredness in her writings" (34).

Alfieri discusses the communal aspect of research in the first paragraph of his comprehensive introduction (34–42): "The life-contexts in which Edith Stein's studies were carried out must be regarded as definitive for the 'rereading' of her writings, since Edith Stein's creative work is from the outset typically community-oriented" (34). Alfieri himself implemented the idea of concrete intellectual work in a community, and compared Stein's conversion to Catholicism to other cases of conversion in the Munich-Göttingen school.⁴ He claims that to understand this aspect is again and again a starting point for re-understanding. This is clearly in line with the well-known Husserlian notion of "always again" (*immer wieder*), upon which this particular community was constituted, including, in addition to Edith Stein,

Cologne. Alfieri lists the persons who helped him tracking down Stein's estate; see 42–43, 47–49.

⁴ Conrad-Martius referred to the issue of the religious conversion of Stein and others in the Munich-Göttingen school; see Conrad-Martius 1960, 66–67; 1921. Conrad-Martius interpreted the conversion of these phenomenologists as an expression of their openness towards the object (*Objektgeöffnetheit*), that is, openness to the things themselves, the facts, and the circumstances. She concludes that if the catholic spirit is understood as the acknowledging of the essential things, all phenomenologists might be considered catholic, although not all of them considered themselves this way; see 1960, 63. Although Conrad-Martius practiced Protestantism, her work is a thorough expression of the orientation towards the object, without relinquishing the accompanying transcendental aspects; see in particular 1960, 67–68; 1956a, 1956b, 1958. For further reading, see Miron 2013. The orientation towards the object is also discussed in Hering 1921, 465; Avé-Lallemant 1971, 87–88; Schmücker 1956, 80–92.

Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Alexander Pfänder, Max Scheler, Jean Hering, Alexandre Koyré, and Gerda Walter (35). The communal spirit is vividly apparent in Conrad-Martius' depiction of that time: "We philosophized passionately, almost day and night [...] We did nothing other than to bring everything, absolutely everything, under the magnifying glass of eidetic inquiry."⁵ In her introduction to Stein's *Briefe an Hedwig Conrad-Martius*, Conrad-Martius (1960) described the reciprocal hospitality, the communal staying that extended for weeks. She considered Stein as her closest friend and thus regarded Stein's friends as her own. Conrad-Martius testified that this first generation of phenomenologists mostly lacked professional philosophical language or a common method, but shared a philosophical atmosphere or spirit.⁶

Readers of Alfieri's volume will be impressed by the wealth and diversity of Stein's work and of the continuous intellectual discourse that has been generated from its inception in the early twentieth century until our time. The question whether her choice of monastic life circumscribed her world should be answered in the negative.⁷ On the contrary, the wide horizons of Stein's oeuvre, evoked by Alfieri's volume, are a proof of a multi-layered penetration into reality in the broad sense, precisely due to her disposition vis-à-vis the transcendent. Conrad-Martius regarded the aiming at the concrete, typical of Stein and the realist phenomenologists of the Munich-Göttingen Circle, as capable of rejecting "the strongest argument for atheism" regarding the seeming impossibility of believing the things, the facts, and the circumstances upon which religious experience is based. Yet, Conrad-Martius argues that once the possibility of the existence of all these facts is acknowledged, "the first shock against atheism must come to the

⁵ Taken from Conrad-Martius' lecture at the conference of the Distinguished Service Cross in March 1958. The lecture was not published, but there is a transcription in the Munich Estate Archive; see Conrad-Martius, DII 2, *Die Nachlässe der Münchener Phänomenologen*, Die Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSM), München. The quotation is taken from Pfeifer 2008, 448 (my translation).

⁶ Conrad-Martius 1960, 62–65. See also Avé-Lallemant 1971, 27–28.

⁷ Conrad-Martius referred to the question, how such an intellectual and highly educated woman as Edith Stein could have chosen to become part of a rather narrow community of the Carmelite monastery. She answered that every narrow human community facilitates a meeting place between different personal experiences that must be overcome; see 1960, 74–75.

fore.”⁸ The inextricable coherence of the rootedness in the concrete, on the one hand, and the search for an abstract essence that constitutes the concrete being itself, on the other, might explain Conrad-Martius’ far-reaching claim about Edith Stein that “it is impossible to give expression [*ausdrücken*] to a religious person” (1960, 61). Alfieri elucidates this complexity differently, yet still within a metaphysical discourse. He argues that concreteness is a level of consciousness which every scholar with intellectual dignity must achieve and at the same time encounter, by means of this level itself, the restlessness typical of the search for truth.⁹ Undoubtedly, this claim applies not only to Stein’s thinking but also to that of Alfieri himself:

In my immersion in Edith Stein’s researches and exchanges with a few friends from the field of phenomenology, I often tried to devote my attention only to the ‘answer’ to one definite and pressing question. However, I realized that this is insufficient for providing adequate expression to the complexity of the concept of “truth.” One must take a new path that will enable unequivocally to ‘reveal’ all that is ‘concealed’ in the process of recognition. Thus the attention is not directed any more only at finding an answer, but at the continuous “process,” the only thing capable of letting the “word” ripen so that now the question at best would be, what truth might be.

The profit one might obtain from this path is the firm acknowledgment that the answer, at which we arrived only through the patient search for different “ways,” will find its proper expression. (36)

Alfieri associates the above approach to truth with Husserl’s fundamental argument, according to which every consequence is ‘measurable’ thanks to the way that has led to it and to which we turn back again and again in our observation of arguments. Thus, in order to justify an argument “one should never overlook the implementation of the painstaking ‘archeological excavation’” (37). Alfieri contends that phenomenology is essentially a method that aided him along his way of “seeking the indispensable and striving to turn the concealed into the unconcealed” (37). Yet, in Alfieri’s work, in which neither the particular nor the universal is ever exhausted, phenomenology transpires as much more than a method. Indeed, phenomenology is no less than metaphysics, although it is capable of leading

⁸ 1960, 64–65. For the method of “intuition of essence” (*Wesensfassung*), see Conrad-Martius 1956b; Ebel 1965, 15–19; Hering 1921; Schmücker 1956, 13–33; Habel 1959.

⁹ Conrad-Martius also referred to the “personal restlessness” that is involved in the search for truth and regarded it as an evidence of the radicality demanded by standing in the face of God; see 1960, 72.

beyond metaphysics as in the case of Edith Stein, that is, to life with God.¹⁰

Alfieri's approach is crystallized in his image of an 'apartment', through which he elucidates the phenomenological idea of community.¹¹ He explains that the apartment signifies one's self-construction into a new dimension, in which an individual might find his or her identity. The apartment is also the criterion to which one refers again and again while encountering the world, as well as the place where he or she dwells – a dwelling that entails the entirety of materiality and the infinite wealth of emotional processes that guide the person to the supreme and common sphere (37). The consolidation of the most private and personal, together with what is most lofty and spiritual in Alfieri's idea of apartment, throws much light on Edith Stein's analogy between the individual personality and the community.¹²

Alfieri's volume demonstrates the centrality of Edith Stein and the great interest that her oeuvre has evoked from its inception to our own time. This is undoubtedly an indispensable source for everyone who is interested in Stein's thought, as well as in its intellectual context. Every such study will have to make intensive use of Alfieri's volume. The importance and status of Stein's oeuvre, as revealed in Alfieri, become even more amazing when compared to the fate of the work of the other members of the Munich-Göttingen phenomenological community. Most of the important figures of this group, some more and some less, have fallen into philosophical oblivion.¹³ I conclude on a personal tone, hoping that the day will come when the oeuvre of the rest of this community will also be provided with a serious work like the one that Alfieri granted to Edith Stein.

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¹⁰ For an interesting discussion of the question whether phenomenology is a method or metaphysics, see Funke 1987.

¹¹ Edith Stein herself uses the image of apartment. She holds that the innermost part of the human soul is 'God's apartment' (Stein 1950, 461).

¹² Stein 2004. For further reading, see also Calcagno 2007, 25–44; Baseheart 1997, 30–75.

¹³ For further reading, see Avé-Lallemant 1975.

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