

BODY, TEXT, AND SCIENCE

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MARIANNE SAWICKI

BODY, TEXT, AND SCIENCE

THE LITERACY OF INVESTIGATIVE PRACTICES
AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF EDITH STEIN

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The Literacy of Investigative Practices and
the Phenomenology of Edith Stein



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For Helene

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Preface

What is "scientific" about the natural and human sciences? Precisely this: the legibility of our worlds and the distinctive reading strategies that they provoke. That account of the essence of science comes from Edith Stein, who as Husserl's assistant 1916-1918 labored in vain to bring his massive *Ideen* to publication, and then went on to propose her own solution to the problem of finding a unified foundation for the social and physical sciences.

Stein argued that human bodily life itself affords direct access to the interplay of natural causality, cultural motivation, and personal initiative in history and technology. She developed this line of approach to the sciences in her early scholarly publications, which too soon were overshadowed by her religious lectures and writings, and eventually were obscured by National Socialism's ideological attack on philosophies of empathy. Today, as her church prepares to declare Stein a saint, her secular philosophical achievements deserve another look.

I have chosen to place Stein's phenomenology of science into three contexts, each of which is appropriate in its own way. First, the historical context in which Stein wrote was formed by the learned conversations of turn-of-the-century German hermeneutics and of the Phenomenological Movement around the time of the First World War. Husserl was in mid-career and Heidegger was a tongue-tied young man. The first two chapters of this book reconstruct phenomenology as it was being done at that time, when the question of intersubjectivity had not yet received its familiar framing by the pronouns *we* and *thou*.

But the historical context is not the only possible place to begin studying Stein. Since her death at Auschwitz, Stein's writings have attracted controversial interpretations in various academic disciplines and popular media. There now exists a rapidly expanding literature addressing her life and thought. Stein's profound appeal to diverse constituencies--to working men and women as well as to academics of various stripes--is an intriguing part of the picture and must not be overlooked. I found that the various interpretations of Stein could not be dealt with in a perfunctory review of secondary literature, but required the in-depth consideration that I give them in chapter five. These interpretations form the second context for understanding Stein, and they offer readers an alternative avenue of approach to her thought.

The third context for grasping Stein's theory of interpersonal understanding is the present-day debate over constructionism and cultural relativism in the sciences. Feminist theorists and other critics, often drawing on some branch of materialist or psychoanalytic social theory, have argued that scientific data are socially determined to a very great extent. Stein concurs, in principle. Her works on empathy and on psychology establish that natural science is indeed a cultural achievement, for it rests on the ability to isolate *caused* data by recognizing and

subtracting *motivated* data from raw data. This subtractive literacy is the most basic scientific competence, and it is fundamentally interpersonal. In the final chapter of this book, I suggest that the reality of data as the *illegible causal remainder* defeats the critiques of science recently offered by psychoanalytic and standpoint feminisms.

My presentation of Stein's own phenomenology of empathy comes in chapter three, which is addressed to Stein herself. I found that I had to speak my observations and criticisms directly to the person whose thought I was trying to follow. I beg the reader's indulgence for this unconventional second-person construction, and hope that its appropriateness will become apparent in light of the demands of Stein's own theory of empathy. In the fourth chapter I revert to the usual scholarly third-person style as I evaluate Stein's interpretive practices. Here readers will find an account of my most surprising discovery: that Stein composed significant portions of Husserl's manuscript for *Ideen II*.

This book began as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Kentucky under the direction of Professor Ronald Bruzina, for whose mentoring I am deeply grateful. During an all too brief visit to Germany in the rainy summer of 1993, I received guidance and encouragement from Professor Hugo Ott of the University of Freiburg and from Professor Elisabeth Ströker of the University of Cologne. I was cordially welcomed at Edith Stein's own religious community, Karmel Maria vom Frieden in Cologne, where Sister Maria Amata Neyer granted me access to the Edith Stein Archive and shared stories of the small details of Stein's life. In Tübingen, Sister Waltraud Herbstrith of the Edith-Stein-Karmel helped me to appreciate the theological dimensions of Stein's work. During my excursion to Louvain, Steven Spileers introduced me to the Husserl Archive and directed me toward the texts in which I found indications of the Husserl-Stein collaborations.

My first tentative formulations of this project benefited from conversations with the late Sister Mary Catharine Baseheart, Professor Emerita at Spalding University. Subsequently I received generous advice from Professors Alasdair MacIntyre and Ralph McInerny at the University of Notre Dame and Linda Lopez McAlister of the University of South Florida. I am indebted to Professors R. Philip Buckley of McGill University, Barry Smith of the State University of New York at Buffalo, and Karl Schuhmann of the University of Utrecht for their insightful comments on earlier drafts. Portions of this research were presented before the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in October 1995 and the American Philosophical Association in December 1995. Earlier formulations of selected aspects of the work appear in my essays "Empathy Before and After Husserl," *Philosophy Today* 41/1: (Spring 1997) 123-7; and "Caste and Contact in the Galilee of Jesus," *Galilean Archaeology and the Historical Jesus*, edited by Richard A. Horsley and J. Andrew Overman (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1997). My former teachers at Kentucky who will see their influence in these pages include Professors Monica Udvardy, Don Howard, and Ted Schatzki.

My philosophical studies at Kentucky, commencing as they did in the fifth decade of my life, are the fruit of my husband's enabling trust in me. The work is dedicated to an exemplary teacher of empathy, Helene Amanda Nelson Sawicki, who is my dear mother.