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‘I look at him and he looks at me’: Stein’s phenomenological analysis of love

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I look at him and he looks at me: Stein’s phenomenological analysis of love

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ABSTRACT
The Jewish-Catholic philosopher and Carmelite Edith Stein (1891–1942) offers a rich notion of love, based on an original phenomenology, which resulted from an active engagement with her teachers Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler, and was later enriched and deepened by incorporating religious philosophical and theological ideas. In order to locate Stein’s original thinking, the essay will first introduce the two thinkers by whom she was most clearly influenced, and show how Stein contrasted the ‘nothing’, as it is presented in Husserl’s other pupil Martin Heidegger’s existentialist analysis, with the fullness of being to which the human person aspires, and which is given through love (1). Her phenomenological thinking, based on the intersubjective approach to its object, ultimately leads Stein to a triple philosophical statement about love: Love is a principle of being, a principle of knowledge and a principle of relationship (2). The passage through theology verifies what has been said philosophically about its relationship to God, in whom love ultimately finds its completion (3). The three basic principles of love complement and correct each other, to the point not only of issuing in an analysis of the phenomenon ‘love’ but of also opening up an ethics of love (4).

Love is ‘what gives fullness to human being’, the Jewish philosopher and later Catholic Carmelite Edith Stein writes in her review of Martin Heidegger’s Being and Time.

Throughout her work, Stein offers various phenomenological descriptions of love. In this essay, I systematise her statements, and work out the nature of love and its specific ethical importance. Stein’s meditations on love are based on an original phenomenology, which resulted from an active engagement with her teachers Edmund Husserl and Max Scheler, and was later enriched and deepened by incorporating religious philosophical and theological ideas. While Stein learnt a purely phenomenological methodolgy, Scheler’s orientation to a philosophy of life brought her analysis into greater closeness to life. She did not take the existential element of her thought from Heidegger’s philosophy of existence; she owed it rather to her own experience, which was an ‘Attempt to an Ascent to the Meaning of Being’.

The title chosen for this article – a quote from Therese of Lisieux – describes Stein’s basic attitude to prayer. This allows a threefold focus, which represents Stein’s original
way of thinking; she provides a full concept of love: love is seen not only as relationship but also as a principle of relationship, a principle of being and a principle of knowledge. As ‘principle’, love is the fundament, the essence or general law of the mentioned relations. Not just reciprocity, but the Dasein and the Sosein of the beloved interlocutor appear.

- Love is being together, because only two people who are actually present together at the same time and same place can look at each other. Love shows here as a principle of being.
- Love then means seeing and being seen, which is more than the pure acknowledgement of someone’s existence and presence. Those who love, see the innermost depths of the other; so love is also a principle of knowledge.
- Finally, the mutuality of exchanging looks testifies to love as a principle of relationship.

Love is the ground, centre and completion of each social action. This will be shown in twofold fashion: in a philosophical and a theological passage.

In order to locate Stein’s original thinking, I will first introduce the two thinkers by whom she was most clearly influenced, and show how Stein contrasted the ‘nothing’ in Heidegger’s early work with the fullness of being to which the human person aspires, and which is given through love (1). Phenomenological thinking is based on the intersubjective approach to its object, which can be recognised not only in its essence but also in the serious analysis that frees it from all pre-knowledge. This ultimately leads Stein to an original triple statement about love: love is a principle of being, a principle of knowledge and a principle of relationship. The passage through philosophy shows this to be a reality of life on this earth (2); the passage through theology verifies what has been said about its relationship to God, in whom love ultimately finds its completion (3). This brings out the continuity in Stein’s work, which can be understood as an ellipse with two foci. In addition, something unexpected becomes visible: the three basic principles of love complement and correct each other; they issue in an analysis of the phenomenon ‘love’ and open up an ethics of love (4).

1. ‘What gives human being its fullness’

1.1. A life, a work – various aspects

Whoever wants to understand love, has to have experienced it. Stein’s autobiography shows that she was the much loved youngest child of a big family, the legacy of her father who died not quite 2 years after her birth. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Stein – for her time unusually – compared divine love with motherly, rather than fatherly love.³ She experienced the love of her brothers and sisters and the long-lasting love of friendship in the phenomenological circle around Husserl and Scheler.⁴ She testified that love for a possible partner might be total self-surrender.⁵ Pedagogical and parental love opens for the specific character of the other and helps him to discover his/her innermost calling.⁶ Stein places love for people on a par with love for wisdom, into which her search for truth flowed⁷ – truth, incarnated in Jesus Christ,
who Stein followed during her religious life. Love for her people, the Jews, accompanied her, finally, into her death.

This article is based on Stein’s phenomenological–philosophical and religious studies and on her pedagogical and anthropological works. The spiritual work is not considered; it would be too specific. Besides, I concentrate on primary sources as this contributes to a kind of phenomenological research on the text basis without any alienation or secondary interpretation. Further research may extend this short analysis.

1.2. A phenomenology – four ways

In her analysis of the phenomenon ‘love’, Stein followed the classic positive way of phenomenology. She set out with Husserl’s attempt to analyse the evidence of the essence – an affirmative approach (1). She coupled this with elements of negative phenomenology (2), the methodological doubt about the possible essence, which shows its elements even more clearly. This approach enables a form of cross-checking as to whether one of the essential features is missing. To Scheler’s influence, Stein owed echoes of an existential phenomenology (3) which she expanded this into an existential analysis: existential experience shows how personhood can succeed or fail. This leads to a practical phenomenology (4): how to realise the essence. Phenomenology is explicitly directed towards the object – and to texts only insofar as they bear witness to the nature of the object itself. This also applies to the theological field into which Stein expands the phenomenological analysis. Here, too, phenomenology concerns itself with questions of being and with the nature of the relationship of the God and the human being.

Edmund Husserl decisively influenced Stein’s thinking, insofar as she took over his threefold epoché (setting aside scientific assumptions, empirical knowledge and concrete givens of a phenomenon); from him she learned to attempt to use clear concepts and to gain the evidence of the essence; from him she methodologically took over the ideal starting point of phenomenological knowledge, the ‘pure I’. However, Stein considers the ‘thetic’ act, which Husserl neglected in the course of time, to be vital in order to be able to advance to the object as such. To the extent that the object has an empirical quality, a subject must be supposed who is capable of taking up this quality, that is, an empirical subject. While with Stein, the personal I becomes the vehicle of knowledge and action, with Husserl the pure I remains the point of departure for thinking and action. Husserl attributed all acts to the pure I, which according to Stein appertain to the person. According to Husserl, the pure I is ‘the original and specific subjective, the I in its actual meaning is the I of “freedom”’, and it is precisely this that he describes as ‘the attentive, contemplating, comparing, distinguishing, evaluating, attracted, repelled, affectionate, averse, wishing and willing: in every sense the “active”, opinionated I’, that can even relate to its object with love. However, Husserl does not consider the phenomenon of love as such, it is probably mirrored in evaluating and axiological knowledge; however, he does not discuss the personal dimension. For the question as to how love can function as a principle of knowledge, what is decisive is the fact that the self – no matter what its form – is capable of adopting an evaluating response, that is, of grasping axiological truth. Stein goes beyond Husserl by attributing depth to the self, and connecting this depth of knowledge with love.
With his ethics of value, Max Scheler confronts life more clearly. The phenomenon of ‘love’ is described in Scheler’s chapter ‘Wesen und Formen der Sympathie’ (‘The Nature of Sympathy’) and in a chapter on ‘Die christliche Liebesidee und die gegenwärtige Welt’, which has been published in what is probably the work most clearly stamped by his Catholic faith, ‘Vom Ewigen im Menschen’ (‘On the Eternal in Man’).

Values, according to Scheler, are ‘irreducible fundamental phenomena’, that are accessible to ‘feeling contemplation [fühlende Anschauung]’; the highest value, the value of the person, is only accessible to love. Ethical knowledge takes place as feeling, forgiving, loving and hating; love is the power of free persons to ‘mutually accept in themselves the core of each other’s individual being, and to affirm it emotionally within themselves’. ‘To give and take individuality’ constitutes the nature of love; Stein would also emphasise that love has individuality as its goal. Love sees the ideal value-being in others, aarms them absolutely in their being and understands them completely.

In order to determine how Stein viewed the existential element, we shall draw on her criticism of Heidegger, more precisely on her review of ‘Sein und Zeit’. In ‘Sein und Zeit’ Martin Heidegger wanted to offer a fundamental ontology in the sense of an ‘existential analysis of existence [Dasein]’. Dasein, as a being made available to itself, initially occupies a solipsistic position; ‘being available’ is existential, that is, for self-knowledge the person is not dependent on others. Expressions such as ‘I’, ‘subject’, ‘soul’, ‘person’, as well as ‘human being’ and ‘life’ are avoided, because Heidegger wants to get around every objectification. As a result, Stein criticised, Heidegger forgoes the possibility of depicting the uniqueness of the existential ‘self’. Then this self is the personhood of the human being and the person is the bearer of all other ‘existentials’. Heidegger understands the body-soul being and the concrete being-with-others as existentials – instead of considering the person as the centre of those qualities; therefore the content of those essentials remains strangely indeterminate. Only in the concrete being-in-the-world is the self enabled to show concern and care, so that an echo of the phenomenon of love appears – the ‘sight’ [Sicht] of the other. Stein asks whether Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein is adequate for suitably questioning the meaning of being. The existentiality of Dasein, the ‘existential truth’ as such, is not the ‘advance into nothingness’ [Vorlaufen ins Nichts], but the ‘meaning’, the fullness, from which human beings can live.

Das, worum man sich ängstet, und zugleich das, worum es dem Menschen in seinem Sein geht, das ist das Sein als eine Fülle, die man bewahren und nicht lassen möchte – das, wovon in Heideggers ganzer Daseinsanalyse nicht die Rede ist und wodurch sie doch erst Grund und Boden gewinnen würde.

The Dasein spreading out between nothing and nothing can only concern nothing; it is empty and loses itself in emptiness. The actual experience of being reveals the orientation of being to a different being. So self-transcendence, ex-istence, is, according to Stein, stimulated by the orientation to another quality of being that lifts the ‘present moment’ and the ‘situation’ out of their randomness, and helps us to understand them.
as ‘order’ or ‘plan’: ‘All this means the bonding of the Dasein to a being, which is not his [being], but its ground and its aim’. Only in divine Being will the human being be given the full possession of his being that enables him to free himself from the convulsed tenseness of concern for his own existence, and to transcend it towards eternal being. ‘So care [Sorge] and temporality [Zeitlichkeit] are by no means the ultimate meaning of human being, but – according to his own testimony – precisely what has to be overcome as far as possible if it is to arrive at the fulfilment of the meaning of its being’. Stein noted critically:


Faith and redemption give people this fullness; however, what is imprisoned in banality, or being advancing into non-being, is ‘a rejection of true, actual being’ and hence ultimately unredeemed. – Stein connected the principle of being, love, with God’s being. This opened up the possibility of talking about the meaning of existence, which Heidegger never explored, because it can only be found in divine love.

2. Love – a philosophical analysis

2.1. Love as a principle of being

The most basic expression of love in its widest sense is affirmation of being, which shows in appreciation of the other person: each person is a value in himself or herself. Each human being unites in himself all the layers of being with a specific personal quality, that is, as a being endowed with intellect, a human being is ‘Dasein accessible to the self’.

Das menschliche Dasein ist also auf der einen Seite stoffgestaltendes Leben […] wie das tierische und pflanzliche und auf der andern Seite geistig-persönlich, innerliches, in sich geschlossenes und doch wieder über sich selbst hinaussteigendes, eine Welt umfassendes und für Mitlebende erschlossenes und aus ihren Quellen sich erneuerndes, schließlich durch das Ich frei bestimmtes.

This definition reveals four interrelated fundamental conditions of human being: life as such, being-beyond-oneself through intellectual understanding, freedom and, finally, accessibility to other living beings that expresses itself as love. All fundamental conditions are secured in the unconditional affirmation of love, because love allows freedom, understands the other person and protects his or her life. Love’s affirmation of being
does not require achievement, but equates to the unconditional acceptance of the other, because ‘the value of a person is only fully revealed to the one who loves’. Love grasps and aims at the personal value of a person; that person is loved for himself or herself; thus, love aims at the pure Dasein of the other, and upholds them in it.

Love is a principle of the soul, a spiritual principle that transcends pure rationality and touches the depths of a person. The states of the soul, such as love, mercy, forgiveness, bliss and peace, can only be experienced emotionally as an expression of the depths of the soul. Love aims at the deepest, most personal and most valuable qualities of the human person; that is why it is mirrored in the deepest levels of the soul. It is only from these depths that the soul can embrace itself wholly; only here is the human being completely at home, wholly himself and completely free. At its deepest point he can measure everything against an ultimate standard, and this measure is love, because it is the deepest.

In addition, love is a principle of growth. Stein is trying to create a practical phenomenology, that is, an analysis that includes not only theory but also practical experience: love and trust are the decisive and fundamental pedagogical attitudes, because they provide the educator with free access to the child; they allow the child to grow undisturbed, prevent fear and awaken love and respect in return. In order to be able to promote the original personality of the pupil, the educator has to recognise it and devote himself to the child; in this way, he forms the child into a member of the community who is capable of bonding. Love, therefore, determines the entire work of education; it leads the person being educated to self-knowledge, self-education and sound self-love.

2.2. Love as a principle of knowledge

Following Thomas Aquinas, Stein counts love among the assertions of knowledge. The purpose of all knowledge is to rest in the vision of the truth that reveals itself to the attentive intellect. The highest knowledge of the natural intellect is the recognition of the essence achieved by successive analysis or intuitive knowledge; Stein defines it as ‘the conformity of a reality with the corresponding pure form’. The deepest knowledge of self and the other person takes place through love, because the value and individuality of one’s own self, and that of the other person, is only opened up in the depths of the soul; no superficial empathy would get to know a person’s secrets. For the one who loves, the person loved is incomparable; the mystery of his being is only ‘felt’ by love, because the quality of a person’s individuality is ‘intangible’, immediate, an ultimate given; it only reveals itself fully to divine knowledge. In loving trust the individual needs and possibilities of a person unfold; the human person only reveals himself to a loving gaze.
In the context of love, mention is suddenly made of a function of the mind: memory. However, what remains in memory are above all touching experiences which, ‘depending on how intensive the experience, will more easily remain alive in our conscious awareness’. In the depths of his soul a person knows about himself; here he possesses himself; from here he can surrender himself, that is, love; this is where the deepest knowledge is preserved. ‘Love, however, is the deepest. So memory has its innermost ground in love’. The duration and intensity with which experiences are taken in is also influenced by a person’s basic mood and ‘heart’, the centre of the person where a person takes in the world as a value. ‘Perceiving with the heart’, as Stein also calls love, became her principle of ethical knowledge as the ‘feeling of value’ is primarily a cognitive function. However, values cannot be understood unambiguously; they gain objectivity through the greater depth of the corresponding feeling. Social feelings are deeper than feelings for asset values, but the deepest of all is love. Whoever is unable to love, is unable to know values adequately and becomes indifferent. All relevant ethical fundamental relationships of human beings are reflected in love: the relationship to the self, to the world, to other people or to a community, and to God. Love is the fundamental force, and becomes a fundamental value to the extent that it correlates to the personal value it is trying to protect and preserve. In love, a person unfolds his greatest possibilities. It is the ‘highest fulfilment of the destiny of the human being’. 

2.3 Love as a principle of relationship

As a principle of relationship, love generally leaves a stamp on all relationships. In one form or another, it is always present. Stein characterised love – by the means of positive phenomenology – as the expression of self-surrender, as a transforming force, and as the principium of freedom. The first sign of love is that one is attracted by the unique character of the other person; yet, in its perfection, love is ‘– because of reciprocal self-surrender – being one’. For those who love, love becomes a life-giving and strengthening source, a power to become like the beloved without losing oneself. Following the way of a negative phenomenology, Stein demarcates love from other phenomena: love and hatred are neither elemental forces nor do they arise from simple emotional contagion; love is also more than the respect that can be demanded in principle for the value of a person, more than a general acknowledgement of human nature and human kindness, or the sexual act arising from lust. Love is more than the vague willingness to do good to others, more than a hidden need for admiration or blind affection. These contrary phenomena of love lack the essential characteristics of self-surrender, the source of life or the transforming power. The analysis of the essential characteristics makes it possible to distinguish love from its false forms.

A further essential element of love is freedom: self-surrender is ‘simultaneously receiving and a free act’. Becoming one in love is, therefore, only possible in freedom and does not destroy the human person, because love is the ‘free self-surrender of the self (Ich) to a you (Du) and the two becoming one in we (Wir)’, ‘the self-giving of the self as an act of the one possessing himself, that is, of the person’. In love, freedom even develops because it gifts a person more than it requires of him or her. In this sense, love proves to be the ‘principium’ of freedom, its beginning and its essential origin, and the ultimate source of every community.
3. Love – a passage through theology

3.1. Love as a religious principle of being

The essence of God is love; this has been revealed to the believer who has empathetic access to the Divine Being.75 ‘God is Love, that is what Augustine assumed, and that is actually the Trinity. For love involves one who loves and one who is loved, ultimately love itself.’76 In God, knowledge and love, being and love, are one; in love also the human spirit is an image and likeness of God.77 Knowing, creating and redeeming, the tasks of God in relation to creation, emanate from his love; they are one and the same process in all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.78 The God who is love is himself a community of free and reciprocal giving and receiving.79 It is in this that the three essential elements of love – affirmation of being, knowledge and community – have their origin.

Love is a free gift of a free God80; he gives himself to his creature and establishes a kingdom of love; his love, which awakens being and gives life, is the origin of humankind and a permanent gift of the Creator.81 As God’s mystery, human beings are willed by him and called to fulness of life.82 Love is also the essence of pure spirits because their basic act is knowledge, love and service; they are oriented in purest love to God and one another, and are nourished and guided by love.83

Love is the original principle of the relationship between God and the human being; His ‘all-merciful love’84 inclines towards human beings and is perceived in the depths of the soul, the place of encounter with a loving God. Philosophically, this is the place of freedom, of self-knowledge, truth and love; theologically, it is the ‘place of free union with God’,85 the acceptance of God into the soul and the acceptance of the soul into God.86 Love is the original ground and completion of redemption and the covenant between God and humankind.87 The human being actually finds himself through an ‘utterly unconditional letting go of self’ because ‘self-surrender [to God] is the freest act of freedom’.88 The mystery of the individuality of human beings and God is revealed in the perfect encounter with God: ‘In its ascension to God the soul transcends itself, or is lifted up above itself. Yet as a result it only really reaches into its innermost being for the first time’.89

3.2. Love as a religious principle of knowledge

In God, love, benevolence and knowledge are one, and mirrored in every spiritual-intellectual action.90 In faith, the ‘simple and loving upward glance of the spirit to the hidden God’,91 an unconditional encounter takes place, an intuitive experience of God’s closeness.92 Like love, so faith is an act of freedom: God, as the absolute reality, holds back and makes room for the free acceptance of revealed truth.93 Precisely this act of divine kindness awakens the desire in people to return that love, so that knowledge, love and action fuse to become one in faith.94

Knowledge of God and self-knowledge meet in love, because Christian truth reveals itself as a person, and will then not become accessible to the will, but to love.95 The grace of this love that enables us to know God is gifted to human beings; memory, intellect and will unite in the loving knowledge of God and his love for humankind.96
Um sich Ihm aber liebend hinzugeben, müssen wir Ihn als den Liebenden kennenlernen. Und so kann nur Er selbst sich uns erschließen. In gewisser Weise tut dies das Wort der Offenbarung. Und zur gläubigen Annahme der göttlichen Offenbarung gehört sinngemäß schon liebende Zuwendung.\textsuperscript{97}

Faith also leads to deeper self-knowledge and sound self-love: ’Through union with God the created spirit embraces, blesses and freely affirms itself. Surrender to God is at the same time surrender to one’s own self, beloved by God, and to the whole of creation’.\textsuperscript{98} In this way, a person gets to know himself and others in God, and God in himself and others.\textsuperscript{99}

### 3.3. Love as a religious principle of relationship

Love is the origin and goal of freedom. God’s ‘overflowing, plenteous, free and self-giving love’\textsuperscript{100} anticipates human love and creates identity and initiative in human beings, because loving relationship and self-surrender are only possible between free creatures.\textsuperscript{101} So love is ‘the freest thing that exists. Self-giving as an act of a self-possessing being, that is, a person’.\textsuperscript{102} The goal of freedom, in its turn, is love.\textsuperscript{103}

God’s love motivates us to love others and opens people up for community, and that to an extent which exceeds natural love.\textsuperscript{105} Love for Christ brings about a new community, the Corpus Christi mysticum, and the spirit of selfless and protective love for others.\textsuperscript{106} Love which is ‘ready to serve, merciful, life-giving, and life-promoting’\textsuperscript{107} appears in the Christian commitment to education and formation, as well as in the love of parents who have been influenced by Christianity, who in this way become examples of love of God and neighbour.\textsuperscript{108} Other forms of love of neighbour that grow out of love for God are mercy and prayer, sharing in Christ’s mediation, the life of the Church and her perfect love of neighbour.\textsuperscript{109}

In a theological context, existential phenomenology\textsuperscript{110} also asks for the possible break-up of human being and its possible perfection. Stein’s existential analysis of human being (Sein) shows that the negation of fullness through emptiness that threatens existence can, in its turn, only be overcome in relationship to God, because the longing for fullness that is innate to human nature will never be satisfied with the penultimate, but only in striving for the ultimate.\textsuperscript{111} Human existence is completed in love, just as love in its turn is completed in God. Every encounter in love is only an ‘approximation to fullness, but is not the fullness of being itself; the human being only finds this in the realm of divine grace in which he is transformed and perfected’.\textsuperscript{112} Here, the paradox of freedom is dissolved in the paradox of ‘religio’: the free and loving re-bonding to the freedom-giving and permanently imparting absolutely Free One. Christian theology summarises the fullness of loving encounter in the concept mysticism.\textsuperscript{113} In mystical espousal the soul makes itself available in absolute freedom and opens itself to a perfect exchange of life in love.\textsuperscript{114}
Es wird die göttliche Hingabe entgegengenommen; darum ist die Hingabe der eigenen Person zugleich die kühnste Besitzergreifung, die alles menschliche Begreifen übersteigt. Johannes vom Kreuz bringt das sehr klar zum Ausdruck, wenn er sagt, die Seele könne Gott nun mehr geben, als sie selbst sei: sie gebe Gott in Gott sich selbst.\footnote{115}

In God, the soul finds the fullness it longs for: it finds peace.\footnote{116} Paradoxically God also finds himself in people – not because he needs people, but because his love is essentially open for the human You. That is why Stein was able to state: ‘Happy the soul in whom the feeling is alive that God rests in it and finds refreshment!’\footnote{117}

4. Ethics of love

4.1. ‘I look at him and he looks at me’

Love is being together (Miteinander-Dasein), the principle of being that introduces the other person into Dasein. The fact that a person comes into Dasein is not a purely biological act; in the purely biological sphere, the survival of the soul is not secured. Only love makes it possible for a person to become a person, a personal being realising his/her individuality: each person has to be \textit{affirmed} lovingly in order to be able to become a person.

Even more, each person will and must be \textit{known} in order to be able to become himself. Here, love as a principle of knowledge comes into play. Since his actual \textit{So-sein}, his qualitative individuality, is only revealed to a person through love, and since it only opens itself to love, love is fundamental to personhood.

This change of approach testifies to the principle of relationship. Although love can be given one-sidedly, it can only experience fulfilment if it is returned and \textit{avowed} to each other. The answer of love must be based on genuine mutuality. If this is revoked, love is doubted. Since love is based on trust, doubt is the beginning of its breakdown.

The essential elements of love are mirrored in the principle of being, the principle of knowledge and the principle of relationship, and can be expressed in three simple statements: (1) It is good that you are here. (2) It is good that you are as you are. (3) And that is true forever. The first statement confirms existence, the second the \textit{So-sein} of the individuality recognised in love, and the third qualifies the relationship as a permanent, faithful and loving relationship that overcomes doubt.

4.2. The practical necessity of affirming being, knowledge and relationship

At this point \textit{practical phenomenology} comes into play again. In practice, that is, in actual relationships, it shows that affirmation can be refused, that knowledge can be prevented or blocked, and that faithfulness can be shattered. Are we then talking about love? The examination of the phenomenon ‘love’ by means of the three principles, that are at the same time essential characteristics, makes it evident that if one of the essential characteristics is lacking, it leads to false forms of love, which \textit{negative phenomenology} can reveal:

- Love without the affirmation of being has to be described as \textit{abuse}: the other person becomes a means to one’s own goals; no consideration is taken of the feelings of the one who is apparently loved. Since feelings represent the depths of a person, abuse
becomes spiritually destructive of the abused person. As a result, his independent existence is destroyed, as people can testify who have been the victims of sexual or psychological abuse, which made use of their feelings by a pretence of love.\(^{118}\)

- **Love without knowledge of the other is *deception***. What is loved is the picture one makes of the other – and this is often a mirror image or projection of one’s own needs. This so-called love is a pretence of false facts, because it does not affirm the other person as he or she really is. The unappreciated beloved will soon feel the emptiness he or she is expected to fill. In order to do justice to the beloved, he or she would have to abandon or distort themselves. This cannot succeed in the long run.

- **Love without relationship ends in *consumption***. It results from lust and leads at best to reciprocal calculation of costs and benefits. The other person experiences that an investment will be made in him or her as long as the costs and benefits balance out. The danger is always there that one of the partners turns away when the other no longer serves his purposes. Here, the other is degraded to a function or merchandise.

In all these relationships, people deceive themselves about the nature of love and become disappointed.\(^{119}\) However, if love is lived in keeping with its essence, it introduces people as human beings into existence: it strengthens them in their *Dasein* – permanently and completely. It confirms them in their *Sosein*, and allows them to grow as they really are according to their innermost being, so that as the one who loves and the one who is loved they become more themselves than is possible on their own. Love then not only becomes necessarily fruitful in a community that is not limited to duality but also exists permanently for others. Human love only achieves this as an approximation; only God can love perfectly.

### 4.3. The existentiality of love and life in its fullness

As becomes evident through this brief excursion into practical and negative phenomenology, the three essential elements point lead to the existentiality of love. This points to an **existential phenomenology**. This is because ‘existential experiences arrive at their existentiality precisely through their inescapable concreteness – revealed in the success or failure of being human –, not through the reflection of this in the inviolability of immanent consciousness’.\(^{120}\) Everything *that questions the dignity of the human person* – and hence also that which makes a meaningful life impossible – is experienced (negatively) existentially. Existential experiences are characterised as those ‘in which humanity as a whole succeeds or is threatened with failure’.\(^{121}\) Relationships in which a person is affirmed and known, and to which a person makes a permanent commitment, possess this character of existentiality, because they decide on whether a person can succeed as a human being, or not. In such relationships a person experiences meaning, truth and the ascent to the meaning of being is achieved. Here, life begins in its fullness, which is secured in God. A student’s question may serve as a constant inspiration for reflection on the phenomenon of love: ‘If God is love, is love then God?’ Love is divine if it gives the other person what God gives him or her without reserve: a recognition of being, a confirming knowledge of their *Sosein*, and an avowal of faithfulness. In such love, God is present in human beings.
Notes

1. Stein, “Martin Heideggers Existenzphilosophie,” 479. All English translations from the German originals are made by Mary Cole.
2. Subtitle of *Endliches und ewiges Sein*.
21. Cf. ibid., 549.
24. Cf. ibid., 447.
25. Ibid., 466.
28. Cf. ibid., 463.
29. Ibid., 473. Accentuation E. Stein.
30. Cf. ibid., 476.
31. Ibid., 477.
32. Ibid., 479f.
33. Ibid., 479.
34. Ibid., 480.
36. Ibid., 420.
Cf. ibid., „Gefühle sind verankert in verschiedenen Schichten des Ich (die Liebe z.B. in einer tieferen als die Zuneigung). Sie haben andererseits personale Werte zu ihrem Korrelat.“


49. Stein, *Die Frau*, 104.


71. Ibid., 355. Cf. ibid. 299: „Das Wir als die Einheit aus Ich und Du ist eine höhere Einheit als die des Ich. Es ist – in seinem vollkommensten Sinn – eine Einheit der Liebe.“
72. Ibid., 355.
76. Cf. ibid., 377.
79. Cf. ibid., 299f. and 355.
80. Cf. ibid., 300.
89. Stein, *Was ist der Mensch?*, 61.
100. Stein, *Die Frau*, 25.


110. As described in 1.2.

111. Cf. Stein, *Endliches und ewiges Sein*, 57 and 58: „So kommt es [das Subjekt] zur Idee der Fülle, indem es an seinem eigenen Sein durchstreicht, was ihm selbst als Mangel bewusst ist.“


113. Cf. ibid., 218.

114. Ibid., 199.

115. Ibid., 150. Cf. ibid., 143 and 223.

116. Cf. ibid., 69 and 212.

117. Ibid., 181.

118. It should be mentioned that Stein does not engage with depth psychology or psychoanalysis; her teacher in Breslau, William Stern, was rather critical about Sigmund Freud; Steins partners in critical discourse were the representatives of empirical psychology; her own psychology is closer to personalism.


120. Wulf, *Was ist gut?* 280.

121. Ibid., 182.

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