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Scientific work and life of Edith Stein – psychological assumptions of empathy in the light of the problem of ecumenism

Abstract

The article is an attempt to analyze the manifestations of empathy in Edith Stein's scientific work and life, and it draws attention to the psychological role of empathy in the development of personality. It is worth emphasizing the importance of both the very figure of Husserl's outstanding student and the ecumenical significance of her work. The concept of "empathy" appeared in the first decades of the 20th century and the basis for the analysis of this phenomenon was philosophical (phenomenological) deliberations on the problem of cognition of other people's psychic states. One of the first psychologists to draw on the achievements of phenomenologists and apply the term *Die Einfühlung* was Theodor Lipps. In the Anglo-Saxon literature this term was translated as "empathy" or "sharing feelings with...". In psychotherapy today, important findings in the field of empathy were made by a Rogers and Batson, in Poland Rembowski. The article presents fragments of Edith Stein's selected writings, letters and statements, which bear testimony to her interest in the problem of empathy both in her scientific work and in her personal life. The factual material presented and its analysis is additionally based on the Personality and Axiological Model by Mróz, which focuses on the dimensions of competence, social relations and autonomy. Stein's biographical facts and statements on empathy are presented with emphasis on the relations and dependencies between the scholar's psychobiography and the dimensions of the MOA and references to the issues of ecumenism.

Keywords: Edith Stein, empathy, ecumenism, Personality and Axiological Model, development.

Twórczość naukowa i życie Edyty Stein – psychologiczne założenia empatii w świetle problematyki ekumenizmu

Abstrakt

Artykuł stanowi próbę analizy przejawów empatii w twórczości naukowej i życiu Edyty Stein oraz zwraca uwagę na psychologiczną rolę empatii w rozwoju osobowości. Warto podkreślić znaczenie zarówno samej postaci tej wybitnej uczennicy Husserla, jak i wymowę ekumeniczną jej twórczości. Pojęcie „empatia” pojawiło się w pierwszych dekadach XX w., a podstawą analizy tego zjawiska były filozoficzne (fenomenologiczne) rozważa-

nia dotyczące zagadnień poznawania cudzych stanów psychicznych. Jednym z pierwszych psychologów, który czerpał z osiągnięć fenomenologów i użył terminu *Die Einfühlung*, był Theodor Lipps. W literaturze anglosaskiej pojęcie to tłumaczono właśnie jako „empatia” bądź „odczuwanie razem z...”. Współcześnie w psychoterapii ważnych ustaleń w obszarze empatii dokonali: Rogers i Batson, a w Polsce Rembowski. W artykule prezentowane są fragmenty wybranych pism, listów i wypowiedzi Edyty Stein będące świadectwem przeżywanej przez nią zainteresowania zagadnieniem empatii zarówno w twórczości naukowej, jak i w życiu osobistym. Przedstawiony materiał faktograficzny oraz jego analiza opierają się dodatkowo na Modelu Osobowościowo-Aksjologicznym MOA Mróz, koncentrującym się na wymiarach kompetencji, relacji społecznych i autonomii. Fakty biograficzne i wypowiedzi Stein dotyczące empatii przedstawiono z podkreśleniem związków i zależności występujących między psychobiografią uczonej a wymiarami MOA i odniesieniami do zagadnień ekumenizmu.

Słowa kluczowe: Edyta Stein, empatia, ekumenizm, Model Osobowościowo-Aksjologiczny, rozwój.

1. Introduction

A well-known statement by Henry A. Murray that every man is in certain respects: like all other men, like some other men and like no other men, combines well the work and life of the outstanding phenomenologist, Carmelite and a saint of the Catholic Church – Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross OCD). This thinker, who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, went a long way from Judaism through atheism to Catholicism; also on the ground of phenomenology, she presented problems that rarely appeared in the area of philosophical interest, because they indicated the role of empathy in perceiving the Other. In the social field, on the other hand, she presented pioneering views both on women’s participation in scientific and socio-political life. The emphasis on Edith Stein’s attitude to life and references to the social field in her work will be of significance in the light of contemporary ecumenical activities. One of the most important issues in the ecumenical dialogue is to invite Christians of different denominations to enter a spiritual space where they can all observe and reflect on a possible common path. In this light, Edith Stein as a person and her writing are perfectly suitable for showing how cooperation with different people can be competently combined with the testimony of one’s own life.

2. Emotional sharing – basic rule of empathy

More thorough analyses defining the term “empathy” began to appear first in philosophy, and more specifically within phenomenology, and then became a leading theme in psychology. The phenomena related to the cognition of these specific elements, which are other people’s psychic states and the ability of oth-

er people to understand them contributed to the definition of the term discussed within the realm of phenomenology.

Edith Stein defended her PhD thesis on philosophy, dedicated to the problem of empathy (*die Einfühlung*) as a special act of cognition concerning another human being. She did it in 1917 at a renowned university center – Göttingen, under the guidance of the founder of phenomenology – Edmund Husserl¹. She developed this topic later in her further works, mainly devoted to the structure of a human person.

The dissertation mentioned was also one of the more cognitively meaningful works on interpersonal communication. The author notes that the world in which the “I” (the experiencing subject) lives is not only a world of physical bodies, but also of other experiencing subjects. The phenomenon of someone else’s mental life is present and unquestionable. The capturing of someone else’s experiencing occurs in the act of empathy. Stein distinguishes the “pure I” (which has no depth) from the “I experienced in emotion” (it has layers of different depth).

According to Stein, an experience is a feeling if it presents a certain object. Feelings, in turn, reveal individual properties of a person: “The so-called ‘sensations of feelings’ or ‘sensory feelings’, such as pleasure in a tactile impression or sensory pain, already reach into the sphere of the I. I experience pleasure and pain on the surface of my I. At the same time I also experience my ‘sensory receptiveness’ as the topmost or outermost layer of my I. There are, then, feelings which are ‘self-experiencing’ in a special sense: general feelings and moods”².

In describing the theoretical act, Stein indicates the *de facto* close relation between cognitive empathy and emotional empathy. While the first kind of empathy is the ability to accept other people’s ways of thinking, and their culturally defined perspective from which they embrace reality, emotional empathy is recognized as the ability to feel other people’s psychic states. The *Einfühlung* as understood by Stein is an act of cognition that is not confused with memory or imagination, or with external perception, although it has something in common with them. She defines it in the following way: “Empathy, which we examined and sought to describe, is the experience of foreign consciousness in general, irrespective of the kind of the experiencing subject or of the subject whose consciousness is experienced”³.

Stein’s study on empathy was a new contribution to the field of phenomenology, but most importantly, it was a response to an inner requirement to analyze

¹ Edith Stein. 1989. *On the Problem of Empathy. The Collected Works of Edith Stein. Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Discalced Carmelite*. Vol. 3. Transl. by Waltraut Stein. Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 8.

² Edith Stein. 1989. *On the Problem of Empathy*, 100.

³ Edith Stein. 1989. *On the Problem of Empathy*, 11.

a human person and all their various dimensions. Husserl's PhD student wanted to explore the essence of the "I" and the essence of the "other" as a subject that is given to us through empathy. Empathy is the basis for the occurrence of an authentic human community in which individuals are not mere objects, but first and foremost they are subjects of experience, capable of entering into a relationship without losing their identity. It is worth emphasizing that the elements mentioned above can describe perfectly the conditions for desired ecumenical relations, in which there is both a need for a community to experience religious acts and to understand oneself from the perspective of one's own subjectivity. Ecumenism, after all, is not only formal cooperation between different Christian churches, but above all it is about open interpersonal relations, common search for references and inspirations, respect for otherness, and ordinary human kindness.

In this context, it is also worth stressing that in Edith Stein's biography many of her friends and acquaintances were Protestants⁴, and the very significant event for the baptism of this eminent phenomenologist also took place in her Protestant friends' home⁵.

The event from Reinach's house clearly shows not only surprise with the situation, but also the resulting deep experience, described later by the author of the doctorate on empathy: "This was my first encounter with the Cross, with the divine power that the Cross gives to those who carry it. It was the first time the Church revealed itself to me in a visible way, born out of the Passion of Christ and His victorious death. At the same time, my unbelief fell apart, Judaism faded in my eyes, while the light of Christ intensified in my heart. This is the reason why, after accepting the Carmelite habit, I wanted to add the name of the Cross to my name".

⁴ In Göttingen she met a young associate professor, Adolf Reinach, Husserl's right hand for contacts with students, who made a big impression on her. Edith became a friend of the family's. Reinach was killed in 1917 during the fighting in Flanders. The young widow Anna asked Edith then to help her sort out the philosophical manuscripts of the deceased for the needs of a posthumous publication. She felt anxiety in her thoughts, being forced to go to a house she remembered as filled with beauty and joy, convinced that she would find it in pain and despair. However, she found the atmosphere of peace there and saw a friend with a face marked by pain, but as if transformed and full of hope (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Edith Stein. 2000a. *Life in a Jewish family*. Cracow: Publishing House of Disalced Carmelites, 195–210).

⁵ During the summer of 1921 Edith Stein was for some time a guest of another couple she was friends with, also converted to Protestantism. One evening, when both spouses had to leave, they left their own library at her disposal. And this is an account of what happened: "Without choosing, I took the first book that fell into my hands. It was a great volume, entitled: *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila*, written by herself. I started reading it and was so absorbed by it that I did not stop until I finished. When I closed it I had to confess to myself: 'It is true!'" She spent the whole night reading, went to town in the morning to buy herself a catechism and a missal, studied it thoroughly and after a few days went to the first Mass of her life (S. Teresa Renata Od Ducha Świętego. 1973. *Edyta Stein – Siostra Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża – Filozof i Karmelitanka*. Paris: Éditions du Dialogue, 61).

3. Empathy – psychological context

The first psychologist to draw on the achievements of phenomenologists and apply the term *die Einfühlung* was Theodor Lipps. His views were inspired by works of such thinkers as Edmund Husserl and Wilhelm Dilthey. And although today he is remembered as the father of the first scientific theory of *the Einfühlung*, the term itself was first used by Robert Vischer in 1873. Unlike his predecessors, Lipps used the term to explain not only how people experienced but also how they understood other people's psychic states. He did it by comparing the term "compassion" to a process that allows human mind to become "a mirror of itself". He explained this interesting mental phenomenon by means of illusion in optics⁶. In 1909 Edward Titchener translated *die Einfühlung* as "empathy" and "sharing emotions together with...". And since then the term has been translated in this way in Anglo-Saxon literature optics⁷.

Nowadays, in personality and clinical psychology, thanks to the works of Carl Rogers, being empathic is understood and defined as "perceiving the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition" optics⁸.

For Rogers, a founder of modern psychotherapy, feeling and showing empathy was a *sine qua non condition* of the level of relation with the client (this is a new and his favorite term for a patient).

The founder of the Rogerian therapy put several conditions for the therapist to work with the client. These were, on the one hand, unconditional acceptance consisting in communicating the acceptance regardless of what the person in need of help said and how he did it, and on the other hand, the authenticity and consistency of the message, consisting in a truthful, honest and unambiguous message. Rogers also indicated the ability to communicate with the client in an empathetic way, making sure that he understood and felt the client's problems.

At this point it is worth emphasizing that before the phenomenon of empathy began to be associated more with psychology and pedagogy than with philosophy, it was described as "copying", "imitating" or "liking somebody". *Nota bene*, it was the German phenomenologist Max Scheler who entitled one of his most important works: *The nature of sympathy*, therefore as soon as at the beginning of the 20th

⁶ Theodor Lipps. 1897. *Raumästhetik und geometrisch-optische Täuschungen*. Leipzig: J.A. Barth Verlag Lipps.

⁷ Edward B. Titchener. 1909. *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of Thought Processes*. New York: Macmillan.

⁸ Carl Rogers. 1975. "Empathic: An unappreciated way of being". *The Counseling Psychologist* 5 (2): 5.

century many philosophers were interested in how a human being could feel emotions, how and to what extent they were able to do emotional sharing and understanding of experiences as well as the Other's point of view⁹.

In Rembowski's research, the level of empathy among students of psychology, pedagogy, university of medicine and university of science and technology was not statistically significantly different, but showed that students of psychology reacted more emotionally to negative stimuli and revealed a higher level of readiness to contact other people view¹⁰.

In turn, in Ewa Wilczek-Rużyczka's research on empathy¹¹, it turned out that students of nursing and psychology showed significant domination in the level of empathy as compared to students of technology faculties. This aspect of the research results is important and should be emphasized because in Edith Stein's biography there is an episode of working as a volunteer nurse at the military hospital for infectious diseases in Hranice, Moravia, during World War I (April–September 1915).

The author of this article also values this way of understanding, and through the Personality and Axiological Model MOA this approach can be discussed in terms of traits.

Meanwhile, it is worthwhile analysing needs, i.e. trace what has contributed – to a significant extent – to the establishment of the MOA. The aforementioned Henry A. Murray, in his concept of personality, assumed that one of the basic issues of personality development were needs. It is thanks to the needs that we can explain human behaviour, it is thanks to them that someone's behaviour can become more understandable and clear for us, and finally it is thanks to them that we can observe changes in personality, because they constitute the main component of personality. Murray understood the way of human functioning as a result of multidimensional interactions. He wrote about personality that it was a product of internal dispositions and environmental experiences that appeared in its physical, biological and social environment. All these areas were modified by the culture of the group which a given person was part of¹².

If you look at Edith Stein's life and work against this background, you can see a lot of information valuable from the perspective of personality research. On the one hand, this talented Husserl's assistant had innate intellectual and personal predispositions, which she developed successfully (university studies in

⁹ Max Scheler's work was also referred to by Edith Stein. See Stein. 1989. *On the Problem of Empathy*, 27.

¹⁰ Janusz Rembowski. 1989. *Empatia*. Warszawa: PWN.

¹¹ Ewa Wilczek-Rużyczka. 2002. *Empatia i jej rozwój u osób pomagających*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.

¹² Henry A. Murray. 2008. *Explorations in Personality*. New York: Oxford University Press.

the field of philosophy, doctorate with *Summa cum laude* distinction), and lived in a culturally rich world which was a source of her inspiration, but on the other hand, due to her change of faith, she separated herself from this world in a way, yet did not break the spiritual bond with Judaism. Finally, when she chose to live in a contemplative order, she continued, whenever she could, her scientific work (research on *Quaestiones de veritate* by Thomas Aquinas or her own work *Endliches und ewiges Sein*).

The need for achievements, perseverance, domination and – generally speaking – the desire to influence the surrounding reality was reflected in Stein's decision to join the newly formed German Democratic Party (DDP) in 1918. When communicating the news to her Polish friend whom she had met during her student years at Göttingen university, Roman Ingarden, she commented on this in the following way: "I may even be elected as a Board member soon"¹³.

Referring to the cognitive needs presented by Stein and her acquisition of further degrees, Elżbieta Adamiak wrote that Stein's life confirmed her words: the scientific and writing legacy of this exceptional inhabitant of Wrocław seems to have bigger impact than the scientific achievements of her colleagues, who did not encounter formal barriers, however only a narrow circle of professionals are familiar with their names¹⁴.

The fact that the author of the book *On the Problem of Empathy* struggled against the social and political situation of Germany in the 1920s (no opportunities for a woman to pursue a scientific career) and 1930s (no opportunities for a Jewish woman to pursue a scientific career), is proved by the words she included in her letters to Ingarden (in March): "My habilitation in Kiel is lost, the same as in Göttingen. So I am preparing to stay regularly in Breslau. When the political relations become clear to the extent that planning something for the following day will no longer seem like a laughing matter to anyone, I will make an effort to gather people who form a kind of private academy. As you can see, failure has not taught me modesty"¹⁵.

In April she also wrote: "I am sick and tired of trying to get my habilitation. So much strength and time is being wasted on it that could be used for a better cause"¹⁶.

Since the author of the book *On the Problem of Empathy* had experience with various emotions, but also satisfaction because of the opportunities arising from

¹³ Święta Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2003. *Autoportret z listów. Listy do Romana Ingardena*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 165 (Letter of 30.11.1918).

¹⁴ Elżbieta Adamiak. 2012. „Edyty Stein i Jana Pawła II teologiczna wizja kobiecości”. *Teologia Praktyczna* 13: 179–190.

¹⁵ Edith Stein. 2003. *Autoportret z listów*, 188 (Letter of 15 March 1920).

¹⁶ Edith Stein. 2003. *Autoportret z listów*, 190 (Letter of 30 April 1920).

the fact of acquiring education, she tried to draw attention to women's education and emphasize the role of integrating knowledge from various fields¹⁷.

As Adamiak comments on it, when posing a question about women's specificity, Stein refers to a wide range of scientific disciplines, from psychology, sociology, philosophy to theology. While adding that one of the most important threads "is the issue of women's education, it seems justified to add a pedagogical dimension. In any case, it is an interdisciplinary and integral approach, with the philosophical approach being the most distinct one in the way of posing questions and finding answers to them. In the phenomenological method adopted by Stein, what is essential is first of all a source experience, then intuitive justification of the result of cognition, and thirdly, its perception in the context of other objects, through distinctiveness"¹⁸.

It is worth quoting her views on women's professional matters, expressed and published in the 1930s: "There is no doubt that a woman is able to take up any occupation apart from her vocation to marriage and motherhood, as evidenced by the experience of recent and current years and indeed the experience of all times. It can therefore be said that when necessary, any normal and healthy woman is suitable for professional work. Conversely, there is no profession that she cannot do (...). No woman is only a woman; each one has her own characteristics and talents, not less significant ones than those of a man, and thanks to this she can perform artistic, scientific and technical work, etc. Individual talents can be essentially focused on any field, even one that is fairly distant from female specificity, and on non-female occupations"¹⁹.

According to Murray, the function of personality is that it enables the achievement of goals and is responsible for behaviour control. For this reason, it is worth recreating biographical facts and finding relations between them.

We make conclusions about the needs on the basis of the effect, i.e. the final behaviour; its particular structure or form; selective response to a specific class of stimuli; expression of a specific emotion; expression of satisfaction or disappointment when the effect is not achieved²⁰.

What type of needs dominated Stein's life in the light of the above? Undoubtedly, cognitive openness, boldness and unconventionality of decisions were the reason why as soon as at school age quite a distinct personality was formed, manifesting

¹⁷ Cf. Mirosław S. Szymański. 1992. *Niemiecka pedagogika reformy 1890–1933*. Warszawa: WSIP, and Anna Grzegorzczak. 2001. Nauka Edyty Stein o kobiecie wobec współczesnych tendencji feministycznych. In Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża (Edyta Stein). *Kobieta i Karmelitanka Bosa – Patronką Europy*, 47. Poznań: Flos Karmeli.

¹⁸ Elżbieta Adamiak. 2012. „Edyty Stein i Jana Pawła II teologiczna wizja kobiecości”.

¹⁹ Edyta Stein. Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża. 1978. *Z własnej głębi. Wybór pism duchowych*. Tłum. Immaculata Adamska. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 25–26.

²⁰ Henry Murray. 2008. *Explorations in Personality*, 182.

the need for competence and autonomy, cognitive needs and the need to understand oneself and others. In her autobiography she recalls: “From an early childhood, a group of our relatives defined me mainly on the basis of my two characteristics: they thought I was ambitious (and rightly so) and gave me the nickname ‘this wise Edith’. Both of them hurt me a lot. The latter especially because it sounded a little bit as if I was conceited and only wise for that reason, and from the earliest years I knew that it was much better to be good than wise”²¹.

This factual description also carries a certain charge of emotions, presents personality traits, and draws attention to the sphere of values that Stein believed in. It is worth trying to place these contents in the field of the MOA verified on a group of creative people, as they can show new manifestations of functioning of this outstanding phenomenologist.

4. Personality and Axiological model in empathy

The identification of needs that are important for people in terms of their satisfactory functioning was undoubtedly an achievement of the 20th-century psychologists and, more importantly, it was done through empirical research²².

The statement that, for example, the need for autonomy or the need for perseverance play such a significant role in the sphere of achievements, has contributed to the development of research on individuals involved in work and has resulted in many changes in, among others, the area of education.

The eudaimonistic tradition and its contents present in the works of Western psychologists have also found their followers in Poland²³. These publications clearly indicate a growing role of research on satisfaction with life and its connection with many areas of human functioning. These implications made the author of the article decide to verify the dependence between the broadly understood sphere of personality and values, and to create the MOA, which she verified empirically then.

²¹ Święta Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2000². *Pisma*. Vol. 1: *Dzieje pewnej rodziny żydowskiej*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 104.

²² Henry Murray. 2008. *Explorations in Personality*; Bogdan Wojciszke. 2005. “Morality and competence in person and self-perception”. *European Review of Social Psychology* 16: 155–188; Richard M. Ryan, Edward L. Deci. 2002. An overview of Self-Determination Theory. In *Handbook of self-determination research*. Ed. Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan, 30. New York: University of Rochester Press.

²³ Irena Heszen-Niejodek. 2003. Wymiar duchowy człowieka a zdrowie. In *Zasoby osobiste i społeczne sprzyjające zdrowiu jednostki*. Ed. Zygfryd Juczyński, Nina Ogińska-Bulik, 42. Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ; Barbara Mróz. 2011. *Poczucie jakości życia u pracowników wyższego szczebla: uwarunkowania osobowościowe i aksjologiczne*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar; Barbara Mróz. 2015. *20 lat później – osobowość i hierarchia wartości wybitnych aktorów polskich. Badania podłużne*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

An assumption was made that the sense of the quality of life among adults is conditioned by personality and axiological dimensions, which include: structure of needs, focus on achievements, adaptation and values. The sense of the quality of life (including the psychophysical, psychosocial, subjective and metaphysical spheres) was defined as experienced satisfaction resulting from the assessment of the level of personal adaptation, satisfaction with one's own competence, good interpersonal relations and materialisation of values. The sense of the quality of life results from personality and axiological conditions²⁴.

The MOA answers the following questions: how selected personality and axiological dimensions influence the sense of the quality of life and its spheres and how the functioning within the structure of needs, adaptation, achievements and values is connected with the level of the sense of the quality of life. The sense of the quality of life (including the psychophysical, psychosocial, subjective and metaphysical spheres) is defined as experienced satisfaction resulting from the assessment of the level of satisfaction with one's own competence, good interpersonal relations, acting with a sense of autonomy and materialisation of values²⁵.

Each of these four areas provides an opportunity to experience the subjective quality of life. A general physical condition, one's own identity, interpersonal contacts or higher values can cause fuller experiencing of well-being and strengthen additionally the desire to enhance it²⁶. Moreover, experiencing satisfaction by people in these dimensions favours their subjective evaluation in the temporal aspect. These types of comparisons in terms of the sense of the quality of life or the meaning in life are made by human beings in emotional, behavioral and cognitive dimensions.

While searching for dependencies and new theoretical references, it was noted that these corresponded most closely to the establishment of the following areas: competence (consistent pursuit of a goal, strong sense of duty, efficiency in action, having the ability to anticipate, showing cognitive openness, good personal adaptation, talents, high intelligence); social relations (seeking contacts with people, patience, openness, satisfaction with one's role in life, attitude towards cooperation, tactfulness, having the ability to sympathize and look after others, easy adaptation to the group) and autonomy (appreciating freedom, entrepreneurship, and self-confidence).

²⁴ Barbara Mróz. 2012. Various management forms and their determinants in the hierarchy of managerial values and self-concepts. In *Functioning in the Workplace. Quantitative and Qualitative Psychological Research*. Ed. Barbara Mróz, 20. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

²⁵ Barbara Mróz, Agata Chudzicka-Czupała, Małgorzata Kuśpit. 2017. *Kompetencje osobowościowe i twórcze. Psychologiczne uwarunkowania kreatywności pracowników*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 27.

²⁶ Bogdan Wojciszke. 2005. "Morality and competence in person and self-perception".

Regarding the conditions applying to both professional and private spheres, three distinct dimensions have been defined as follows:

- Competence reflects knowledge and the need and ability to influence the course of events, the need for effort, and refers to the effects of actions taken.
- Relationships are a reflection of the needs and skills of social contact with people, care for them, the ability to build up a real social bond with an internalized system of values, and adaptation. Social relationships are defined on the basis of categories of responsibility and autonomy.
- Autonomy reflects the need and ability to act with a sense of freedom and liberty of choice, self-confidence, meeting challenges, cognitive boldness and a scope of interests²⁷.

The axiological dimension of the MOA is also composed of the terminal values distinguished through the analysis of paths from Milton Rokeach's concept and survey: "mature love" and "family security"²⁸. Rokeach defined a value as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct was personally and socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct and life goals. For Rokeach, the system of values was a permanent organisation of beliefs about preferred modes of conduct or end-states of existence.

The formation and changes in the system of values are important elements of personality development in human beings. It is worth emphasizing that the importance of an integrated system of values for the assessment of the level of the sense of meaning and quality of life was a fundamental category also in Gordon Allport's concepts, as well as confirmed in the author's own research.

The role of empathy as an expression of personality maturity fits well into the issues mentioned above. The next subsection will present an attempt to analyse the relations between the manifestations of empathy in Edith Stein's scientific work and life in the light of the dimensions included in the MOA.

5. The importance of empathy in Edith Stein's scientific work and life – MOA Model

The analysis of the psychological aspects of empathy in Edith Stein's scientific work and life will be based on factual material, which is her selected writings, letters and lectures. It will be presented in the light of three dimen-

²⁷ Barbara Mróz. 2015. *20 lat później – osobowość i hierarchia wartości wybitnych aktorów polskich*.

²⁸ Milton Rokeach. 1968. *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values*. San Francisco: Jasssey-Bass, Inc.

sions of satisfactory functioning (sense of meaning and quality of life): competence, social relations and autonomy which constitute the Personality and Axiological Model.

Challenges that a human being undertakes at different stages of life, realization of the tasks entrusted develops a need for competence, which motivates an individual to seek a goal. Satisfying the need for competence enables fuller expression and also increases the degree of independence of functioning. Materialization of the need to be a professional in a particular field leads to expanding the repertoire of competence behaviours when the individual receives positive feedback on the effectiveness of his/her own actions. It is important whether these are actions aimed at cause or community²⁹.

The manifestations and level of competence can be discussed since the moment a person comes into contact with the educational process through the work performed. If we look at Edith Stein's biography from this perspective, what is surprising is the significant role of education in her life. It is worth stressing that she was one of the few women at that time who decided to continue their education at university. It was as late as at the beginning of the 20th century that most universities stopped admitting only men as students.

The motivation to do university studies, the cognitive curiosity that characterized Stein since her childhood, made a question about whether to study not appear at all, as the answer was quite obvious. In turn, as soon as during her university studies, when analysing the curriculum offered by the University of Breslau, Stein concluded critically, although not without reason, that she would not be able to continue to broaden her knowledge there. She made a right decision and after a second year of studies she moved to Göttingen, where she undertook phenomenology under the guidance of its founder, Edmund Husserl. By getting into an inspiring and confession-differentiated academic environment (Adolf Reinach, Max Scheler) and by meeting people who, because of their interests and achievements, could provide her with a perspective of intellectual development (such as Hans Lipps, Hedwig and Theodor Conrad-Martius, Roman Ingarden), she benefitted fully from this situation to develop her competence³⁰.

As mentioned earlier, the doctoral thesis on the problem of empathy was awarded a distinction, and the prospect of working in Husserl's department could give unquestionable satisfaction, at least in the first period after the defence of the doctorate.

²⁹ Andrea Abele, Bogdan Wojciszke. 2007. "Agency and communion from the perspective of self-versus others". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93: 751–763.

³⁰ M. Laurel-Leigh Meierdiercks, John Snarey. 2016. *James and Husserl: The early development of phenomenology of religious experience. Presented at the Circle in Phenomenology of Religious Experience*. Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union.

The question arises, however, whether at the time when she was doing scientific work on the development of the problem of empathy, was it possible to see its manifestations also in Stein's own life? And can the area of professional competence be combined with manifestations of empathy in life, with a broader view of ecumenical issues? From today's perspective, when one compares young people's style of learning and working with the rat race as a recipe for career, it is hardly possible to ignore this problem. Let us give the floor to Husserl's student: "The contact with older, more mature and scientifically advanced people obviously gave the young student a boost and developed her, but also had a less secure side. When the students discussed their doctoral theses and preparations for the state exam with me, thanks to my ease of understanding and extraordinary ability to penetrate into others, I understood them immediately, and even took the liberty of making critical or encouraging comments. It made me appear equal to them, and in this way, I also deceived myself"³¹.

When it turned out that for the reason of her Jewish origin she could not do her habilitation in Germany, she began to see her efforts as "a waste of strength and time that could be used for a better cause". Only someone that has a clear picture of the situation and the conditions in which one has found oneself and is open to other opportunities can assess subjectively whether one has made enough achievements in a given field and can make the next difficult decision to resign. There is also a question of what could be the better cause. Referring to the letters, it should be stated that the way in which Stein solved these dilemmas (conversion, joining the Order of Discalced Carmelites), and also due to the different circumstances which helped her solve her problems, was more than satisfactory. It is impossible not to mention the people who helped her at that time and gave her support (Priest Dr. Joseph Schwind, Priest Erich Przywara SJ, Abbot Rafael Walzer). It may also be amazing that as soon as in 1918 she wrote to Ingarden the following words: "I don't know if you could infer from my earlier statements that I have slowly reached Christianity understood positively in all respects. This has freed me from the life under which I have bent, and at the same time has given me the strength to accept life anew and with gratitude. So I can talk of 'rebirth'; in the deepest sense of the word"³².

In these words one can also find the kind of inner freedom that characterizes people who are open to different experiences and yet mature and full of hope. This attitude generally describes those who are involved in the process of uniting people from different sides of disputes, with different religious beliefs, or those

³¹ Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2000². *Pisma*. Vol. 1: *Dzieje pewnej rodziny żydowskiej*, 153.

³² Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2003. *Autoportret z listów*, 154 (Letter of 10.10.1918).

who are interested, for example, in ecumenical activities³³. From this perspective, Edith Stein united and continues to unite people with similar aims and beliefs. And, as can be observed in the contents of her letters, the decision she made turned out to be right and extremely far-reaching with consequences.

The second dimension of the MOA – social relations – shows the role of the natural need to have social contacts, belong and cooperate with people. The materialization of this need also strengthens the third dimension of the MOA, autonomy, which may seem a paradoxical dependence. However, autonomy does not mean isolation or egoism, but rather a sense of causality that can accompany any actions undertaken in cooperation with others. People who are involved in some activity are keen to cooperate with others without any sense of loss of independence or own initiative. This type of involvement strengthens both autonomy and the need for social contacts. Pro-social motives stem from a sense of community of experiences, community of fate and co-responsibility. In the area of social relations, the role of empathy seems to be fundamental and having a formative effect on these relations.

Letters to many addressees included both expressions of friendship and descriptions of creative activities of a group of phenomenologists; in her writings there was also information about work and health of the correspondence recipients. Many letters described meetings with people, showed her attitude towards them and ways of problem solving (own and others'). Let us give the floor to the author: "Last Friday my brother (Arno) said goodbye to me before his trip to America. This was just the fifth anniversary of my entering the convent – our first meeting and farewell, probably forever. Everyone is leaving and going away. Please help me in praying. A short time ago Sister Bonaventura came here again from Bonn and told me about St. Magdalene [the school in Spira where Edith Stein taught from 1923 to 1931]. Sister Bernarda, a faithful chronicler, reported to me the death of the good Mother Jordana, who had still personally thanked for jubilee wishes. Our jubilarian is still very lively and full of life"³⁴.

The letters and statements presented undoubtedly constitute a rich material for multi-aspect research, but for the reason of the method proposed for their analysis (MOA in the dimension of relations) it is worth mentioning Stein's attaching importance to good contacts with people. If the author of the dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy* wrote about her relationship with her mother, with whom she could not share her views on religion, she did it in the following way: "The condition of my dear Mother has improved a little, i.e. her heart is stronger again and there is no im-

³³ Cf. Alfons Nossol. 2008. Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. In *Pontyfikat ekumenicznej nadziei. Z Janem Pawłem II na drogach ekumenii*. Ed. Zygfryd Glaeser, 16. Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.

³⁴ Święta Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2000². *Pisma*. Vol. 2: *Autobiografia w listach 1916–1942*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 312–313 (Letter of 20.10.1938).

mediate danger; however, it is quite obvious for us that she is suffering from another hidden disease (...). My mother could not understand either my conversion or my joining the Order. Now she is suffering from separation again, and I cannot tell her anything comforting. I write to her, but I cannot share important matters with her (...). Perhaps it is the separation from the youngest child, who she has always had special love for, and my small instructions, which I have sometimes dared to give, that work deep inside her soul, although there is no response outside”³⁵.

These words were written two months before her mother’s death, and they showed an understanding of this situation, which was difficult for both women. It was not without feeling into what the other person was experiencing.

Autonomous behaviour is a sign of mature personality. Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci believe that autonomy is closely related to social relations. Of the three needs (competence, relatedness, autonomy), the most basic one is the third one, as it shapes human life from birth. The child’s dependence on its parents develops into autonomous action. In the period of adulthood many contacts with people include the need for autonomy and control. Mutual dependence is the cause of support received, but also of frustration. The essence of autonomy is to engage in action because of interest and voluntary choice. If the need for autonomy is not met, controlling behaviour develops which is or may be disadvantageous as it develops into relationships where there is no equality but dependence. The threat to autonomy is all kinds of excessive rewards, especially cash- and non-cash ones, as they weaken the sense of independence, and disturb the inner sense of causality.

In the light of the above, one can clearly see that Edith Stein’s relationship with her mother, after her conversion, was mature, though painful. It is worth stressing at this point that there is no room for prejudice or hidden intentions in empathy. The essence of empathy is the ability to listen, be open and faithful to one’s own path and the choices made. As soon as in the doctoral thesis of Husserl’s assistant there was a kind of understanding of this phenomenon: “I experience his [the other’s] 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”³⁶.

Self-awareness is an extremely important element in empathy. The more open we are to our own emotions, the more effectively we read other people’s feelings. Naturally, it does not mean that we are not able to defend our own opinion or the decision made. It is because we manage our behaviour in an autonomous way,

³⁵ Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2000b. *Pisma*. Vol. 2: *Autobiografia w listach 1916–1942*, 253–254 (Letter of 19.07.1936).

³⁶ Edith Stein. 1989. *On the Problem of Empathy*, 109.

we are able to communicate, for example, our own system of values directly to someone. Let this be exemplified by a fragment of a letter to Ingarden, a man for whom Stein had a feeling of great friendship: “It would never occur to me that you might want to weaken my faith, I do not expect you to make such a ridiculous intention. Nor am I afraid to confront your accusations”³⁷.

There is a lot of concern and fear for others in Edith Stein’s writings and letters; this could be observed not only in the context of external anxiety (World War II), but it was at that very time that her statements became particularly dramatic. In a letter to her friends – a Protestant couple, Mr and Mrs Conrad-Martius, Stein wrote: “Do you know where Anna Reinach is? I have no news of anyone. Hans [Lipps] has been fighting at the front again – since the beginning of the war. Where may his children be? And Ingarden and his four sons?”³⁸.

As if despite the times and tragic circumstances (arrest and imprisonment in Westerbork Camp in the Netherlands), one of her last letters sent to Mother Ambrosia, Antonia Engelmann, five days before her death in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the German concentration camp, which was found on the occasion of a request for documents and information about people staying in the same barrack, included a short note about how both sisters were feeling (Stein was arrested together with her sister Rose): “We are completely calm and serene of the case”³⁹.

The ability to function effectively in various conditions, establishing and maintaining interpersonal contacts by manifesting empathy as well as the ability to be autonomous result in, as it has been verified empirically many times, a high level of the sense of the meaning and quality of life. In the light of the data quoted about Edith Stein, one can say that this kind of positive verification was made by life itself.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of psychological aspects of empathy in the work and life of Edith Stein has confirmed the assumptions about the importance of emotional, cognitive and behavioural components that can be distinguished in the process of empathy. These elements could be observed both in the dimension of competence and social relations as well as autonomy. If this way of presenting Stein’s thoughts and scientific activities has broadened the evaluation of her achievements, it has, thus,

³⁷ Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2003. *Autoportret z listów*, 154 (Letter of 1.01.1928).

³⁸ Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2000². *Pisma*. Vol. 2: *Autobiografia w listach 1916–1942*, 350–351 (Letter of 5.11.1940).

³⁹ Św. Teresa Benedykta od Krzyża, Edyta Stein. 2000². *Pisma*. Vol. 2: *Autobiografia w listach 1916–1942*, 378 (Letter of 4.08.1942).

fulfilled the intentions of the author of this article. What has proved extremely important in the analyses have been the references to the ecumenical attitude, the ability to cooperate and face various attitudes and views. Last but not least, while concluding it is important to emphasize the times in which Stein lived, which did not favour demonstrating this kind of behaviour.

The manifestations of empathy, described from the perspective of phenomenological considerations, and the personality richness of the author of the dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy*, make it possible to consider many threads while presenting the work and the person. The encouragement from both philosophers and psychologists to attach more importance to consonance in interpersonal contacts is an appeal for better insight into one's own mental life.

The aim of such encouragement may be, on the one hand, a cognitive one, to get to know oneself and one's values better, and, on the other hand, an educational one, connected with the formation of positive character traits or attitudes. If this is accompanied by the ability to build up trust and self-awareness, then these elements may influence correct interpersonal contacts and become a model of social behaviour, which, in the light of the ecumenical subject matter discussed, may be very favourable to it. Care and the ability to cooperate and be open also within various Christian confessions are nowadays extremely necessary and socially desirable.

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