




Review Article

Edith Stein on the Problem of Empathy: A Critique

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>In Steins' mind, the problem with empathy is one of meaning and structure. The concept's enigma is characterized by its historical comprehension as well as other sensory acts, which Stein feels are insufficient. Embarking on the challenge of phenomenologically articulating and categorizing what should comprise empathy and an empathic act, she establishes the distinctive meaning of and reference to empathy. Stein successfully tells us what empathy is not but leaves us still with some wonder as to how it should be appropriated in every day's existence. This systematic breakdown of Stein's concept of empathy brings to our full comprehension what the phenomenology of empathy means for Stein and points out the lacuna in her explication through an analytical method.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 30-08-2023 ▪ Accepted: 21-10-2023 ▪ Published: 24-10-2023 ▪ IJCRM:2(5);2023:51-57 ▪ ©2023, All rights reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Manuscript ID: IJCRM:2-5-9 ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">How to Cite this Manuscript</p> <p>Judith Gure Gwatana. Edith Stein on the Problem of Empathy: A Critique. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Research in Multidisciplinary.</i> 2023; 2(5):51-57.</p>

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1. Introduction:

The act of deducing someone's thoughts and experiences from their expressions was the original definition of empathy. The word *empathia*, which means bodily fondness or passion in Greek, is the source of the idea (Harper, 2021). However, throughout time, the idea gained traction in Germany as a topic of interest to late-modern and contemporary German philosophers. Thus, in 1908, the word empathy emerged as a translation of the German *empathie*, which literally translates as "in-feeling." The idea behind this definition of empathy was to transfer one's own imagined sentiments and movements onto inanimate objects in addition to comprehending another person (Psychology Today, 2021). The meaning of the concept of

empathy has varied from the onset and has not been reconciled yet. This has also affected its application to certain situations. An understanding of empathy as a shared feeling does not necessarily require a person to be in the other person's experience or standpoint to share similar feelings with them; it could only require that the person has an understanding of the situation or event, regardless of the dissimilarities between empathizer and empathized. In addition, before the German *empathie* was introduced to the English language as empathy, the concept of empathy was mostly understood in reference to sympathy. Sympathy simply means understanding someone else's feelings from a state created in our own minds and

sometimes from a distance. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy* notes that,

Before the psychologist Edward Kitchener (1967-1927) introduced the term “empathy” in 1909 into the English language as the translation of the German term *emfühlung* (or “feeling into”), “sympathy” was the term commonly used to refer to empathy related phenomena. (2021)

The complexity of attaining a single generalized definition of empathy owes to the fact that the concept spreads across a wide range of psychological, scientific, and philosophical capacities. The understanding of empathy that will be worked with in this research is the meaning and understanding of the concept derived from Edith Stein’s *Phenomenology of Empathy*. Despite drawing inspiration from Husserl and Scheler, she developed a phenomenological theory of empathy that differed from theirs as well as other prominent views from ancient and modern controversies (Svenaeus, 2017).

It will be challenging to understand Edith Stein’s phenomenology of empathy without a fundamental understanding of the meaning and use of phenomenology in philosophical discourse. Through the isolation of everything surrounding an event that can raise questions about what it is, the phenomenological technique, which is part of the phenomenology approach, tries to reveal the phenomenon’s true essence. Stein conceptualizes empathy and how we might carry out empathic acts using this approach. Empathy is viewed by Edmund Husserl, a proponent of phenomenology and collaborator with Edith Stein, as a technique for gaining real understanding and insight into circumstances that occur in our daily lives. Consequently, Stein’s phenomenology of the individual continued to be phenomenological. Her work on the problem of empathy beginning with a characterization of the phenomenological approach, which was mostly taken from Husserl’s concepts. The purpose of phenomenology, according to her, is to clarify and therefore discover the ultimate basis of all knowledge. To reach this goal, it considers nothing that is in any way “doubtful”, nothing that can be eliminated (Moran, 2017). Phenomenology, according to Stein, is the study of phenomena in its real or pure essence, free of appearance-related accidents. Stein takes a phenomenological approach to her idea of empathy, attempting to find its key traits (Moran, 2017). The phenomenological aspects most pertinent to Stein’s empathy are those presented by Husserl in response to two traditional philosophical problems. “What is it that can be known without a doubt?” and “How is this knowledge conceivable in the broadest sense?” are the queries (Stein, 1989). Husserl’s goal was to present a systematic approach to the fundamental concerns of how one subject might relate to other subject(s) and build an objective reality from there. To respond to the first question, Husserl emphasizes the importance of consciousness. This is not to say that the natural world is not full of actual items. However, in order to have a clear knowledge of such things, we must first suspend a presumption of their existence, and whatever remains after the suspension of most essence is what may be known without a doubt. Husserl refers to transcendental consciousness

as that which remains after the suspension of substances and essences. His opinion on the first question is expressed by Waltraut Stein as follows:

In the tradition of idealism, he takes consciousness as the area to be investigated. He posts nothing about the natural world. He puts it in “brackets”, as a portion of an algebraic formula is put in brackets and makes no use of the materials within these brackets. This does not mean that the “real” world does not exist; he says emphatically, it only means that this existence is a presupposition that must be suspended to achieve pure description. (1964)

In answering the second question of the possibility of knowledge in a general sense, Husserl maintains that the method of phenomenological reduction requires the phenomenologist to intuit the essence or *eidōs* of phenomena by first reducing such phenomena accordingly. That is, identifying and setting aside the existential or natural standpoint that stands in the way of a descriptive understanding. Edith Stein uses this phenomenological method and process to present a description of empathy. She claims that the description of empathy within consciousness after the suspension of the existence of empathy must be the basis for any other dealings with the problems by psychologists, sociologists, or biologists (Stein, 1989). Empathy, for Stein, is our, or an experience of foreign consciousness. By ‘foreign’, she means another body other than ours. She calls it a kind of perceiving of the psychophysical experience or feeling of the other.

What it seems that Edith Stein requires us to do in situations where empathy is needed, whether it be a psychological, scientific, or social matter, is to approach such matter having applied the principle of phenomenological reduction. When we think of empathy from Stein’s perspective and in relation to particular situations, experiences, and reactions from daily living, we discover certain things, which includes a partial understanding of the phenomenology (essence) of empathy; its misappropriation to other terms like sympathy or inappropriate expression of the act of perceiving.

Edith Stein on Empathy

As stated earlier, the problem of empathy is for Stein, that of meaning and structure. The concept’s enigma is characterized by its historical comprehension, as well as other sensory acts, which Stein felt were insufficient, resulting in her quest for a phenomenological categorization of what should comprise empathy and an empathic act. Therein lies the caption ‘on the problem of empathy’. The title of the treatise originally was *Das Einfühlungsproblem in seiner historischen Entwicklung und in phänomenologischer Betrachtung* [The Empathy Problem as It Developed Historically and Considered Phenomenologically], (Stein W. , 1989). A phenomenological appreciation of the concept of empathy necessitates the application of the phenomenological method of investigation for Stein as she had learnt from her teacher and supervisor, Husserl. This essay describes the nature of empathy in the context of Husserl’s

phenomenology, as described primarily in Volume I of *Ideas* (Stein W., 1989). She explains that her approach provides what was missing in historical conceptualizations of empathy.

The complete work, from which the following expositions are taken, began with a purely historical treatment of the problems emerging one by one in the literature on empathy before me: aesthetic empathy, empathy as the cognitive source of foreign [*fremdes*] experience, ethical empathy, etc. Though I found these problems mingled together, I separated them in my presentation. Moreover, the epistemological, purely descriptive, and genetic-psychological aspects of this so-called problem were undistinguished from one another. This mingling showed me why no one has found a satisfactory solution so far. (1964)

For her, phenomenological reduction to awareness is the only way to grasp the concept for what it is without conflating it with other ideas she emphasized in her thesis, which will be discussed later in this chapter. For her, understanding what empathy is and what it is fundamentally tied to understanding the "I" as a person and descriptive analyses of empathy is one means of understanding people. As previously stated, her understanding of empathy is primarily rooted in phenomenology, which she believes is the most reliable approach to comprehending an idea and separating it from others. After all, she sees her work as an application of Husserlian phenomenology, with the purpose of clarifying and therefore discovering the ultimate basis of all knowledge (Lovestone, 2017). On that note, she explains her duty in dealing with the concept of empathy through phenomenology:

Above all, it seemed that I should extract the basic problem so that all the others would become intelligible from its viewpoint. And I wanted to submit this problem to a basic investigation. At the same time, it seemed to me that this positive work was a requisite foundation for criticizing the prevailing conclusions. I recognized this basic problem to be the question of empathy as the perceiving [*Erfahrung*] of foreign subjects and their experience [*Erleben*]. (Stein E., 1964)

In general, we shall say that the challenge with empathy in Steins' ideas is appropriating a proper definition for the notion. It is appropriate in the sense that it is described for what it is, apart from the items to which it is assigned. To overcome the discrepancies and opposing claims regarding empathy at the time, Stein used Husserl's technique to discover what empathy is in and of itself (Lovestone, 2017). As it is, the phenomenological reduction provides a 'pure' form of awareness for understanding and meaning of objects. This phenomenological base is what Stein believes sets her version of Empathy apart from others previously offered. She says that any subsequent engagements with the topic by psychologists, sociologists, or biologists must be based on the description of empathy within consciousness after the suspension of empathy's presence (Stein E., 1989).

Stein on the Essence of Acts of Empathy

Stein discusses her method of investigation in this section of her dissertation. It is this that gives her work on empathy its phenomenological footing, thus an explicit exposition is required here.

The description she makes is a description of the pure transcendental phenomenon as it is observed from the special standpoint described above. It is impossible, she maintains as a phenomenologist, for the essence of empathy to be anything else if she has proceeded correctly. (1989)

Ultimately, the goal of phenomenology is to clarify and thereby to find the foundation of all knowledge. To reach this goal it deals away with that which is in any way "doubtful," anything that can be eliminated (Stein E., 1964). The essence of empathic acts for Stein lies in our knowledge and experience of foreign consciousness, which is why, as a phenomenologist, the logical thing to do is to apply that method capable of bringing us to this understanding. The unstated premise that foreign subjects and their experiences are handed to us is at the root of the current empathy debates, (Stein E., 1964). For instance, in Husserl's treatment of empathy as a method of arriving at objective (scientific) knowledge, he asserts that there is an a priori of nature, displayed in the ontologies of the real (Hart, 2006). This insinuates as Stein claims, that our assumption of the givenness of the outside world and things in it (what she refers to as foreign consciousness) complicates our treatment of empathy. If indeed they are given to us, we must find out or understand on what grounds they are given. There has to be an investigation of that which is given, this is about the only way to really understand the meaning of what is given. Stein considers the trouble that could arise from this simple assumption of givenness and avers that the immediate undertaking is to consider the phenomenon of givenness in and by itself and to investigate its essence. She does this in the setting of the "phenomenological reduction." (Stein E., 1964).

Stein's Phenomenological Reduction of Empathy

Edith Stein as a phenomenologist by virtue of tutelage from Husserl and the obvious method of some of her works, the thesis on the problem of empathy, undertakes the description of empathy using the phenomenological reduction method. The emphasis on phenomenology is due to its relevance in her undertaking. This takes us back to the traditional discourse of this method by Husserl, when he says:

I ask now: Can we not attain an attitude of such a kind that the empirical, being the characteristic of the givenness of the natural attitude, remains completely disengaged, and indeed in such a way that also its essence as essence of nature remains disengaged, while, on the other hand, components that enter into the essence of nature or, to be more precise, that enter into nature itself in *individuo*, are maintained? (Hart, 2006)

In simple terms, Husserl is asking or suggesting the possibility of actual knowledge of a thing after it has been disengaged from the things which surround it, or the thing(s) in which it finds itself. According to Stein,

In the tradition of idealism, he takes consciousness as the area to be investigated. He posits nothing about the natural world. He puts it in "brackets," as a portion of an algebraic formula is put in brackets, and makes no use of the material within these brackets. This does not mean that the "real" world does not exist, he says emphatically; it only means that this existence is a presupposition which must be suspended to achieve pure description. (1989)

In applying this to the description of empathy, for which the essence is to acquire knowledge and understanding of the experience of foreign bodies, Edith Stein proposes an exclusion of the physical world and psycho-physical bodies. What remains if the entire world, including the individual who is experiencing it, is removed? In fact, there is still a limitless realm of pure study to be explored, (Stein E., 1964). In order to get rid of deceptions that may occur from the physical world in our attempts to understand consciousness or conscious acts, Stein believes that exclusion or reduction is required. However, because it is what remains after our exclusion/reduction, our perception of that state cannot be questioned. According to Stein,

But what I cannot exclude, what is not subject to doubt, is my experience of the thing (the perception, memory, or other kind of grasping) together with its correlate, the full "phenomenon of the thing" (the object given as the same in series of diverse perceptions or memories). This phenomenon retains its entire character and can be made into an object of consideration. (1964)

It is through this process that empathy can be grasped in Stein's thought. Applying the phenomenological reduction process to empathy, Stein says that, the world in which we live is not only a world of physical bodies but also of experiencing subjects external to us, of whose experiences we know (Stein E., 1964). The existence of these physical bodies cannot be questioned scientifically or materially; but, attempting to explain their experience or consciousness physically could lead to deception due to hallucination and other reasons. The possibility of deceit in physical analysis eliminates any doubts about the feasibility of a phenomenological reduction in Stein's theory. What is to be achieved with this reduction is not just knowledge of physical individuals but psycho-physical individuals. Stein Argues that, The phenomenon of foreign psychic life is indubitably there... We could proceed from the complete, concrete phenomenon before us in our experiential world, the phenomenon of a psycho-physical individual which is clearly distinguished from a physical thing. This individual is not given as a physical body, but as a sensitive, living body belonging to an "I," an "I" that senses, thinks, feels, and wills. (1964)

In order to fully comprehend empathy, we need to grasp the domain of these physical bodies, which is not readily available yet exists and can be manifested physically in certain instances. Furthermore, we could think about these people's individual, specific experiences. Different modes of giving would then emerge, and we could pursue them further (Stein, E.,1964). Therefore, an experiencing subject could give an expression that does not absolutely convey their experience. This means that the significance of Stein's work lies in her descriptions of empathy, of the psycho-physical individual, and of the spiritual person (Stein W. , 1989). This is why Stein's empathy goes beyond what an empathizer can physically achieve; in order to truly comprehend and transmit acts of empathy, it must be comprehended beyond a physical givenness. To demonstrate the full implications and uses of the idea of empathy, explanations of the psycho-physical individual and the spiritual person are required. This is where she differs from Lipps' theory (Stein W. , 1989). According to her,

It would become apparent that there are other ways of being given "in the symbolic relation" than the givenness worked out by Lipps. I not only know what is expressed in facial expressions and gestures but also what is hidden behind them. Perhaps I see that someone makes a sad face but is not really sad. I may also hear someone make an indiscreet remark and blush. Then I not only understand the remark and see shame in the blush, but also discern that he knows his remark is indiscreet and is ashamed of himself for having made it. Neither this motivation nor the judgment about his remark is expressed by any "sensual appearance."(1989)

All of these foreign experience data point to the fundamental nature of the acts by which foreign experience is grasped (Stein W. , 1989). As a result, distinguishing between acts of empathy and other behaviors becomes vital.

Empathy and Sympathy

The problem Stein's work faces and tries to resolve is that it is difficult to distinguish between Empathy and other sensory acts in order to give it a precise definition, given its entangled use at the time. The most common of the linked ideas is sympathy. Sympathy, according to Max Scheler, is a "rejoicing-with" and "commiserating" process in which we appear to have direct "awareness" of other people's experiences while also "participating" in them (Scheler, 2017). The structure and process of this feeling is mostly characterized by outer perceptions. Although Stein acknowledges that empathy and sympathy begin from similar points of perception, they are not necessarily the same things because empathy involves more than just outer perception. The content of sympathized and empathized delight does not have to be the same. (They aren't the same in terms of quality, as one is a primordial experience while the other is not), (Stein E., 1964). Edith Stein believes that what is given first may not always contain the complete expression of that feeling and that sympathy works with what is given first. Empathy on the other hand seeks from what is primarily given to what is not primarily given to get actual knowledge of the emotions. Thus, for Stein, empathy carries a deeper meaning than sympathy for Stein. In her own words:

The joy of the most intimate participant will generally be more intense and enduring than the others' joy. But it is also possible for the others' joy to be more intense. They may be . On the other hand, in the ideal case (where there is no deception) empathic joy expressly claims to be the same in every respect as grasped joy, to have the same content and only a different mode of being given. (1964)

Knowing that both empathy and sympathy are conscious activities, many sensual experiences occur, which, when physically conveyed or 'given' by the experiencing subject, can instruct another individual. Based on the extent of their awareness of the subjects' consciousness, Stein now refers to the other person's reactions as empathy rather than sympathy.

Memory, Expectation and Fantasy

Stein claims that in empathy, investigations into the conscious stream of experience of an empathized subject begins with a primarily givenness to its non-primordially, and is separated from the empathizer's personal experience. There is a well-known analogy between acts of empathy and acts in which our own experiences are given non-primordially (Stein E., 1989). Memory is a recollection of an act or experience whose content is presently absent. The act may be relieved at present but not primordially. The present non-primordially points back to the past primordially. This past had the feel of a previous "now." As a result, memory exists, and what is remembered exists (Stein E., 1989). In the case of remembering with another subject, some things or precise emotions are not exactly the same. In Steins' account of remembering an experience whose act is expressed as joy, she avers that;

The "I" as the subject of the act of remembering, in this act of representation, can look back at the past joy. Then the past joy is the intentional object of the "I," its subject being with and in the "I" of the past. Thus, the present "I" and the past "I" face each other as subject and object. They do not coincide, though there is a consciousness of sameness. But this is not a positive identification and, moreover, the distinction between the primordially remembering "I" and the "I" non-primordially remembered persists. (1964)

Following Stein's expression of memory, it means that remembering does not always require a subject to whom the act being remembered belongs. It's possible to accomplish it with or without the subject, but not with empathy. To put it another way, Memory can be achieved in a variety of ways (Stein E., 1964). Whichever the case, memory is never purely a present conscious act, at best it is a mixture of past conscious experience and present act as an attempt at getting the whole picture, in this case, the joy being expressed. The reproduction of the former experience is the clarification of what was vaguely intended at first. At the end of the process, there is a new objectification (Stein E., 1964). The entire process of remembering and its conclusion, particularly by the second 'I' who is remembering

'with,' does not duplicate the exact past experience in the present and hence renders reliving imperfect. In empathetic awareness, however, it is in this synthesis of past and present that 'experience' is most valuable (Pughe, 2019). In the words of Stein, this image of the past behavior is not a representation of what is past. Rather, it is the requisite completion of the memory image to get the meaning of the whole. It can have the character of doubt, conjecture, or possibility, but never the character of being (Stein E., 1964).

Having addressed what Stein holds as the constituents of memory as an act of consciousness, she moves on to expectation. On expectation, Stein thought it was not necessary to delve into it since it is so parallel (Stein E., 1964). However, one could extrapolate from the term anticipation that a comparison or analysis of two or more situations and experiences serves as a basis for future experience. In his analysis, Pughe explains Stein's comparison of expectancy to the memory process. She sees 'expectation,' or a sense of the future, as a condition similar to the process of synthesizing past and present, but one in which both past and present join together to assist us predict what is to come. Although not 'primordially given,' expectation has a similar immediacy (Pughe, 2019). The obvious difference between expectation and memory is the future experience anticipated.

Fantasy is similar to a memory in certain aspects and different in others, according to Stein. On the subject of their resemblances, she claims that fantasy can be achieved in a variety of ways: A fantasy experience can emerge as a totality, with the inclinations represented in it being realized one by one, (Stein E., 1989). All three conscious acts, in general, do not have primordial experiences, which is another thing they share in common. There is no time distance to cross in 'fantasy,' on the other hand. Actual experiences or those drawn from memory are not fantasized experiences; instead, they take the non-primordial form of current experience (Pughe, 2019).

Critique on Stein's Notion of Empathy

Empathy can be treated as a biological, ethical, psychological and, phenomenological concept. Generally speaking, the concept could mean the same thing across different fields of understanding, except maybe, in its application. When we look at the phenomenology (as in the 'essence') of empathy, our understanding will cut across other fields of learning where the concept applies. This is perhaps the reason why Stein insists that a phenomenological grasp of empathy should be the basis for its application by other researchers and scholars. However, phenomenology as a method of understanding and applying empathy is not without challenges. For instance, Peter Goldie acknowledges that there are different kinds of understanding of empathy ranging from philosophical to psychological and even everyday living. He then states that his work on "Anti-Empathy" is against a particular kind of empathy he terms 'empathic perspective shifting'. In order to give us an understanding of what he means by 'perspective shifting', Peter Goldie differentiates between empathy as a process and empathy as an outcome. Empathy as a process, according to Goldie, is a refinement of empathy as a result in that it distinguishes between

the numerous types of processes that lead to the outcome of shared states of mind. A type of 'resonance', which is more or less unconscious, is one such process (Goldie, 2011). This non-conscious process is referred to as 'low level' mind reading, and it is followed by a process that incorporates mental consciousness and is referred to as 'high level' mind reading by psychologists. '(a) It targets mental states of a reasonably complex type, such as propositional attitudes; (b) Some components of the mindreading process are accessible to deliberate control; and (c) the process has some degree of accessibility to awareness,' according to this procedure (Goldie, 2011). While Steubar refers to this as re-enactive empathy,' Goldie refers to it as 'perspective-shifting,' since Goldie believes that when empathizing, the empathizer intentionally tries to imagine how they would feel if they were the other person (the subject of an empathic experience). For him, empathy is not the same as empathic perspective shifting. He puts it thus:

Very roughly speaking, what I am against is what I will call empathetic perspective shifting: consciously and intentionally shifting your perspective in order to imagine being the other person, and thereby sharing in his or her thoughts, feelings, decisions, and other aspects of their psychology. I am not against what I will call in-his-shoes perspective-shifting: consciously and intentionally shifting your perspective in order to imagine what thoughts, feelings, decisions, and so on you would arrive at if you were in the other's circumstances. (Goldie, 2011)

Basically, Goldie is of the opinion that the process through which we arrive at the outcome of empathy (what he refers to as 'perspective shifting') is not really empathy. It is also important to note that, Although Stein maintains that empathy is separate from other acts, such as, sympathy, memory, fantasy, etc. A viewpoint that scholars like Scheler disagree with. As a result, she gives a presentation on the activities that scholars, philosophers, and psychologists interchange and sometimes misunderstand as empathy. Her efforts to differentiate empathy from sympathy particularly did not provide us with a clear distinction between them as we have seen in this work.

The Problem of Ambiguity in the Concept of Empathy

To begin with, we have seen at least two different meanings and usage of the concept of empathy from reviews in this research. While Husserl's view presents us with a purely scientifically epistemic theory, Stein's account presents us with both scientific, sociological, and even psychological theory. To this effect, Coplan notes that the profusion of different conceptualizations in the literature has created a significant barrier in the research of empathy, making it difficult to remember which process or mental state the term refers to in any given discussion (Coplan, 2011). While this conceptual ambiguity persists, we can see from Stein's perspective how empathy is projected not only as a tool for understanding others, but also as an emotional idea that should impact our conduct

toward others. Empathy, according to Coplan, is "partially mediated viewpoint taking." This perspective-taking might be self-Oriented or other-oriented (Coplan, 2011). The challenge is not that there are two ways of taking perspectives but that one is hardly ever delved into and thus, is capable of distorting the idea of how we respond in empathy. Coplan takes into account Peter Goldie's statement on how un-univocal our response to the same situations would be regardless of which approach is adopted in empathic perspective-taking. Before we reflect on Goldie's statement, we will need to examine Coplan's distinction of Self-oriented and other-oriented perspective-taking in order to make meaning of Goldie's view. In self-oriented perspective-taking, Coplan says that, "we are told to treat others as we would like to be treated and that we are empathetic when we try to imagine how we would feel if in the other's situation", (Coplan, 2011). In other-oriented perspective taking however, a person strives to imitate the target's individual's experiences as if she was the target individual by representing the other's scenario from the other's point of view, (Coplan, 2011). What is being implied here is that we are meant to respond in a certain way that would be in agreement with the empathized subject's experience and reactions. This is where Goldie comes in; he does not think it is possible to have the same or similar reactions from a number of empathizers. According to Goldie, many, if not most, scenarios are more complicated than this, and one person's reaction to a set of circumstances is rarely an accurate predictor of what another will do in the same situation, (Goldie, 2011). Herein lies the difficulty or shortcoming in applying empathy in general to the Covid-19 pandemic response in Nigeria, because it will be difficult to expect similar reactions or response from all players in the response to the pandemic, especially with the corrupt and pervert nature of politics in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This work on Empathy is targeted at guiding our response mechanism to challenges we face as existential beings, this is why we take the liberty of understudying the tenets of empathy with a focus on Edith Stein's phenomenological theory of the concept. The focus on Edith Stein's theory is because we believe that her emotional account of empathy and the three-step method with which we can fulfill empathic acts furthers our course most appropriately. The meaning of empathy for most scholars and philosophers is that the concept is about our feelings for the experience of others, what this does for us is to provide us with an approach to everyday challenges that involve less chaos. The difference is in the content, process, and response of such feelings, which is why we hold Stein's account with the knowledge that our understanding of a thing affects our response to it. Stein's theory is about allowing the expressions of experiencing subjects to guide us into their experience, this makes it less difficult to understand and figure out what an appropriate act should be in given situations.

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