

A Hermeneutic of Empathy:
On Edith Stein in Relation to Hermeneutical Theology

Kit Apostolacus

Ingolf Dalferth

Hermeneutics and Hermeneutical Theology of the 20th Century

“When a nightmare finally does unfold, perspective is a lovely hand to hold.”¹

INTRODUCTION

While she does not fit the mold of hermeneutical theology, Edith Stein remains a strong contender with hermeneutical theology. Neither does she neatly fit Dalferth’s mold for theological hermeneutics. Through her philosophy of empathy (and its penetration into theology), she gleans similar insights as those given by hermeneutical philosophers and theologians, but takes those insights in a neo-Scholastic direction. Parsing this argument out into philosophical and theological insights might work in the academy generally, but it works neither for Stein nor hermeneutical theologians, albeit for slightly different reasons. Though her work is unfortunately neglected among hermeneutical theologians (as in theology in general), I contend that her work can rightly be taken as a preemptive critique of the direction hermeneutical theology went, beginning in the 1960s, and conversely, as among the things critiqued by hermeneutical theologians.

THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS AND HERMENEUTICAL THEOLOGY

Dalferth writes that “theological hermeneutics is...the hermeneutics...of everything that we can (or cannot) understand in a theological perspective—the perspective of the creative presence of God.”² It is, in short, “the understanding of the understanding of God.”³ It examines how one comes from a misunderstanding of God (unfaith) and a right understanding of God (faith). In this way, theological hermeneutics begins its inquiry in misunderstanding. It should be noted that faith, even in Protestantism writ large, is a loaded term and can refer to a wide range

¹ Relient K, “Part of It,” in *Forget and Not Slow Down*, Mono Vs Stereo and Jive, 2009.

² Ingolf Dalferth, *Radical Theology*, 55.

³ Ibid.

of things, whether an ascent to belief in a doctrine, the cultivation of trust in God, or the trust Christ himself places in God. While these aren't mutually exclusive among Protestants generally and even among Catholics and Orthodox Christians, Dalferth neglects to explain what he means by this. It appears that Dalferth's understanding of faith leans toward an ascent to belief with hints to trust, because he labels "understanding of God" as "faith."⁴ In this, God becomes an *object* of interrogation.

Hermeneutical theology, on the other hand, begins its inquiry by viewing God as one who reveals himself and makes himself intelligible to humanity.⁵ In particular, God is *made intelligible* through revelation in the medium of time and human language. This is mediated revelation because "to understand something as something' always means 'to understand something through something as something.'"⁶ The "salvation-event" of Christian kerygma, thus, is further specified as a "speech-event."⁷ God is the reflexive subject of interpretation. As Oswald Bayer puts it, "Because God himself is a hermeneut, theology must be hermeneutical theology."⁸ In this way, philosophy of language is placed on relatively equal footing with theology in hermeneutical theology, because hermeneutical theology is "developed as a theology of the word and reflected in the philosophy of language."⁹

The difference for Dalferth, therefore, is not necessarily the terms in which these two approaches manifest, but rather the order of inquiry. Are understanding and interpretation the primary concern, speaking of how humans (ought to) understand God? Or is it the self-revelation

⁴ Dalferth, *Radical Theology*, 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁸ Oswald Bayer, "Hermeneutical Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56.2 (May 2003): 137.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 137-38

of God, mediated through time, history, and language? Turning to Edith Stein, it seems that there are cases where she fits both categories. On one hand, she does consider faith and unfaith, positing faith as “something that remains for us incomprehensible.”¹⁰ Moreover, following Aquinas, Stein suggests that “the first axiom of philosophy...is that God himself is the first Truth, the principle and criterion of all truth. From God proceeds any truth we can get hold of. The task of first philosophy follows from this fact: it must take God as its object.”¹¹ It seems however that, the reflexive principles we find in hermeneutical theology, overdetermine God as subject. If we consider God’s self-revelation, God is *both* the subject and object. Moreover, for Stein, if we ever take ourselves to be speaking of truth, we ought to take ourselves to be speaking of God as object. This reflexivity is here reflected: “truth bears fruit of itself.”¹²

She also takes God’s self-revelation to be mediated: “God reveals himself to the human mind in a measure and manner commensurate with his wisdom.”¹³ Philosophy and theology are not, however, primarily epistemological disciplines for her. Instead, “a Christian philosophy...must aspire to a unity and synthesis of all the knowledge which we have gained by the exercise of our natural reason and by revelation”¹⁴ and theology too “evolves historically in a progressive appropriation and penetration of the original contents of revealed truth.”¹⁵

Insofar as Stein represents a violation of the differentiation set out by Dalferth, the difference between theological hermeneutics and hermeneutical theology seems rather

¹⁰ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 25.

¹¹ Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, 29.

¹² *Ibid.*, 28.

¹³ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 26.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

negligible. To wit, other writers make no such distinction.¹⁶ Thus, if my thesis is right, then this distinction could perhaps serve mostly to distinguish between Protestant hermeneutics of theology and Catholic ones, more than between different orders or modes of thinking God. I say this because Dalferth persistently reaffirms hermeneutical theology as a uniquely Protestant enterprise: “In the 1950s and 1960s, hermeneutical theology clearly belonged to the most up-to-date forms of Protestant theology because it sought to answer the challenges of an increasingly secular world.”¹⁷

As apparently the sole reason for locating hermeneutical theology exclusively in Protestant theology, this appears to me rather spurious, because it commits the mistake of presuming that Catholic theologians at the time (and indeed long before the 20th century) have not concerned themselves with engaging “the challenges of an increasingly secular world.”¹⁸ Edith Stein is one such example that could fit the denominationally narrow mold of “hermeneutical theology” as set out by Dalferth, in a distinctively Catholic manner, if the denominational requisite is abandoned.¹⁹

¹⁶ See for instance: Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (London: MacMillan, 1991); and Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

¹⁷ Dalferth, *Radical Theology*, 96. Cf. “As a form of Protestant theology, hermeneutical theology, even today, cannot dispense with a concentration on understanding the work of the Word of God as Reformation theology did” (158); and early on, he describes hermeneutical theology as an “a movement within Protestant theology in the second half of the twentieth century that is tightly linked, theologically, with the development and deepening of Bultmann’s theology along the lines of Reformation theology and, philosophically, with the history of philosophical hermeneutics in the twentieth century after Martin Heidegger” (x).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁹ Among Stein in this are also Bernard Lonergan, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Erich Przywara, but more space will be required to explore how they fit too. Additionally, the singularity of “Reformation theology” in Dalferth’s construction seems to ignore the contemporaneity of the Catholic reformation which, though sometimes called the “counter-Reformation,” addressed similar issues as the Reformers.

TO GRASP, TO BE GRASPED

The Enlightenment, in part, can be described as a turn from being (which dominated ancient and medieval philosophies) to epistemology. Quintessentially, this can be observed in Descartes *cogito ergo sum*, where being is subjected to epistemology, which gains primacy. Gadamer and Stein agree that “modern thought, ...dissociating itself from tradition, no longer centers its efforts on the problem of being but on the problem of knowledge.”²⁰ But for Stein this departure from being means a loss of oneself via the possession of oneself only through knowledge. Evidently, this is derived from a biblical principle: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”²¹

The hermeneutical problem is, according to Gadamer, that “to be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete.”²² Underlying this problem is the primacy of being, closely followed by epistemology. Stein agrees, writing, “Thus the theory of knowledge, which moderns place at the outset to ‘justify’ all that follows, turn out to form part of a general theory of being. Thus all questions at bottom come down to questions about being.”²³ But even philosophies of being “remain even in its greatest perfection essentially fragmentary.”²⁴ There is no hint from Stein that she hopes to overcome this essential fragmentation, but rather embraces it as integral to the life of faith. Likewise, Gadamer writes that “time...is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted. Hence, temporal distance is not something that must be overcome.”²⁵ However, while “all human philosophy is bound to be

²⁰ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 4. Cf. “The fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power.” Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273.

²¹ Matthew 16:25 (NRSV).

²² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

²³ Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, 30.

²⁴ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 25.

²⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 297.

fragmentary,” truth is not merely “an idea that must be actualized in an unending process—and hence never fully. Full Truth *is*.”²⁶

In this, Stein shares with Ebeling a skepticism about a mere theory of language.²⁷ Along with Ebeling, she thinks the real concerns of the modern world is a philosophy of life: “Ours is a time that is no longer content with methodical deliberations. People have nothing to hold on to and are looking for purchase. They want a truth to cling to, a meaning for their lives; they want a ‘philosophy for life.’”²⁸ To this end, Ebeling argues that “a person who makes use of language must be true to himself,”²⁹ but a person cannot relate a human life without a religious language—because, precisely, we are created beings.³⁰ This is, like Jüngel, the primary contribution of modern atheism, for it “attempt[s] to think the world *without* God.”³¹ We should not expect God to tell us something untrue, for this will, following Ebeling, inevitably lead to misunderstanding, a failed communication.³² This trust in God makes way for what Makkreel calls an “authentic interpretation” which “approaches God, not through how we perceive his works in nature, but through how he speaks to us as the voice of practical reason.”³³

Reality is, thus, a sort of text, and any who speak of life are hermeneuts—including God. As Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*, “a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity.”³⁴ By this he means that the otherness of the text must be

²⁶ Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, 12.

²⁷ Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*, 129-33.

²⁸ Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, 27.

²⁹ Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*, 178-79.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

³¹ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 57.

³² Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*, 174.

³³ Makkreel, *Orientation & Judgment in Hermeneutics*, 135.

³⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271.

continually recognized and realized. As Stein might say, we must empathize with the text. Stein's reading of Scripture which contains within itself a narrational and theological alterity such that neither the Mosaic Law nor Roman justice tell us of the same sort of intimacy with God that we encounter in the creation account in Genesis or in the Gospels.³⁵ Earlier on in her discussion of male and female vocations, she notes also that "we should not be deemed disrespectful to the Apostle if we suggest here that in this instruction to the Corinthians, there is a confusion as to the divine and human aspects, the temporal and eternal."³⁶ No doubt, this is not a Protestant *sola scriptura* or even the infallibility of Scripture as is common in the Reformed tradition. Scripture is nevertheless viewed, by Stein, as one such medium for the communication of God's revelation. Thus, "divine knowledge may also be called *word* because it comprises the Word of God, i.e., the content of revelation, and thus carries linguistic meaning."³⁷

Stein draws a slight distinction between intelligibility and comprehensibility. For instance, she writes that "What is communicated to us by revelation is not something simply unintelligible but rather something with an intelligible meaning—a meaning, to be sure, which cannot be comprehended and demonstrated in the way natural facts are understood and demonstrated."³⁸ For Stein, comprehension means embracing something as a whole and, in a sense, mastering it. But it is not *only* God who cannot be exhaustively understood, due to his infiniteness, but also the whole of finite reality evades this as well. In this way, anything that is true, comes to conquer us rather than us conquering it.

³⁵ "Neither the account of creation nor the Gospel alludes to such an indirectness of relationship to God. But it is indeed found in Mosaic Law and in Roman justice." Stein, *Essays on Woman*, 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁷ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 107.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

Stein writes in *The Science of the Cross*: “faith gives the intellect a sure but dark knowledge. It shows God as inaccessible light, as the incomprehensibly Infinite One in face of whom all natural faculties fail totally.”³⁹ Faith, thus, is the point at which knowledge becomes inverted from objectification of God to subjection to God. Subjection to God in this darkness is an act of faith—“the darkness that leads to God is...faith. It is the only means that leads to union because it sets God before our eyes as he is: as infinite, as triune. Faith resembles God in that both blind the intellect and appear to it as darkness.”⁴⁰ Faith cannot be traversed by anything—neither the truest of logics nor the clearest of language. This, however, is not tantamount to “anti-rationalism.” On the contrary, “philosophy reaches its perfection with the aid of theology.”⁴¹ Without it, “reason would turn into unreason.”⁴² Similarly, Stein posits that “even finite reality can never be exhaustively understood by means of conceptual knowledge, and much less the infinite reality of God. Thus pure philosophy as a *Wissenschaft* of beings and of being...remains even in its greatest conceivable perfection essentially fragmentary.”⁴³

Beyond this, however, faith affords us a “dark knowledge” which is constituted by an inversion of wills, being mastered rather than being a master. In this, God is no longer an object. “This dark, loving knowledge,” Stein writes, “is the surrender of the soul through the will to the loving approach of the still-concealed God.”⁴⁴ In Jüngel, we find a similar statement—that “the negative experience of God’s invisibility is thus to be understood as increasing the positive experience of God’s self-communication....God is then grasped as the mystery of the world as

³⁹ Stein, *The Science of the Cross*, 61.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴¹ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26. Cf. “To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete.” Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.

⁴⁴ Stein, *Science of the Cross*, 122.

he *comes* to the world.”⁴⁵ Additionally, I think Stein would agree with Jüngel that “whoever possesses himself does not believe....in the event of love we certainly do not experience ourselves as those who possess themselves.”⁴⁶

In her essay “Spirituality of the Christian Woman, Stein discusses the character, Iphigenie, from the eponymous work of Goethe. Iphigenie, according to Stein, “is no construction of fantasy but rather an idealized image which is envisioned, experienced, and empathized from life itself.”⁴⁷ Each of these three—vision, experience, and empathy—work together as a reading of reality. And they are modes through which we understand how “we are gripped, as only total purity and eternal truth can grip us.”⁴⁸

In contrast to transcendental phenomenology, Stein proposes a philosophy that is theocentric,⁴⁹ wherein “being and truth are also one” in God, wholly indivisible.⁵⁰ However, it is theocentric precisely from the point of view that “natural experience [is] the starting point of every kind of thinking that goes beyond natural experience.... We must therefore try to understand how the multiplicity and the unity of existents... can be found side-by-side.”⁵¹ And through this, we turn to her philosophy of empathy.

⁴⁵ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 377-78.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁴⁷ Stein, *Essays on Woman*, 92-93.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁹ Stein, *Knowledge and Faith*, 32-33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵¹ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 333-34.

THROWNNESS, EMPATHY, AND GOD

Gadamer exhibits a sort of suspicion of the hermeneutics of suspicion, especially where language is reduced to ideology.⁵² For Stein, faith is not *simply* an epistemological move, an ascent to belief; rather, it is an ontological move wherein one's whole being is involved and perfected. In a letter, Stein suggests as much:

However much our present mode of living may appear inadequate to us—what do we really know about it? But there can be no doubt that we are in the here-and-now to work out our salvation and that of those who have been entrusted to our souls. Let us help one another to learn more and more how to make every day and every hour part of the structure for eternity—shall we, by our mutual prayers during this holy season?⁵³

Stein shares Heidegger's idea of "thrownness" (*ins Dasein geworfen*), asking who it is that throws us into our immediate, ontic situation. This relates to the idea in Husserl's thought, "the 'thereness-for-me' of others, and... a transcendental theory of so-called 'empathy'."⁵⁴ However, Stein's conception of empathy is far more developed than Husserl's. In *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein posits that it is the eternal God who throws us here. This return to ontology should remind us of where Makkreel says that "we can only achieve the overall interpretation needed for historical understanding by reflecting on our particular place in the world as individuals. The individuating insight of reflective knowing is not just a cognitive having but discloses one's mode of being."⁵⁵

It is not just us as individuals who are thrown into existence, but also we *as other* are thrown into existence with each other. This is the irreducible fact of the other. We do not know

⁵² "There are no limits to the interior dialogue of the soul with itself. With this thesis I would oppose the suspicion that language is an ideology." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 548. Cf. "Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience." Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 27.

⁵³ Stein, *Self-portrait in Letters 1916-1942*, 60.

⁵⁴ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 92.

⁵⁵ Makkreel, *Orientation & Judgment in Hermeneutics*, 32.

this other through mere inference, but rather through *empathy*, which is “the experience of foreign consciousness in general, irrespective of the kind of the experiencing subject or of the subject whose consciousness is experienced.”⁵⁶ She continues: “I not only know what is expressed in facial expressions and gestures [of others], but also what is hidden behind them.”⁵⁷ Like faith, therefore, empathy affords us knowledge of that which is hidden but nevertheless presented before us.

This discursive relationship is justified for two major reasons. First, because if it is true, we become grasped by it; and second, faith is a sacrament to God and empathy is a sacrament to the other. When we inquire into “implied tendencies” of a given countenance which we empathize, “([trying] to bring another's mood to clear givenness to myself), the content, having pulled me into it, is no longer really an object. I am now no longer turned to the content but to the object of it, am at the subject of the content in the original subject's place.”⁵⁸ This is related to what Ebeling calls “two-way movement of apprehension and utterance”⁵⁹ because empathy is at once “primordial as present experience though non-primordial in content.”⁶⁰

Empathy, however, is not just a feeling of understanding, but also enables participation and stimulation.⁶¹ One does not simply understand the other—or God—but participates in life with them in such a manner that catalyzes further living, further thinking, and further loving (stimulation). Thus “because hidden souls do not live in isolation, but are a part of the living nexus and have a position in a great divine order, we speak of an invisible church.”⁶²

⁵⁶ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁹ Ebeling, *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*, 169.

⁶⁰ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 10.

⁶¹ Stein, *Essays on Woman*, 115.

⁶² Stein, *The Hidden Life: Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts*, 110.

Ecclesiology is, for Stein, a part of empathizing with God. When we understand, participate, and are stimulated in the Church, we must also think ourselves collectively as the Body of Christ—God’s vicar on earth. Thus, Christ remains incarnate precisely through the Church. This ecclesiology is without a doubt very different from many Protestant ecclesiologies (which appears to be a major lacuna among hermeneutical theologians), but it gives us an added dimension to engage with when considering the “understanding of God.” The Church is a sign of the presence of God in a world of the absence of God precisely because God is, in fact, present. Dalferth argues similarly, that “no phenomenon as such is a sign of God’s hidden presence. Rather, phenomena become such signs only through Godself” for Stein precisely because no phenomenon *as such* exists without God and his hidden presence to begin with.”⁶³

Empathizing God, then, is necessarily caught up in salvation, which is not “a one-time event,” but something that “fills our entire lives.”⁶⁴ We are thrown not only into relations with other humans, but also God himself. And this thrownness makes God, in Christ, eternally present. When we seek a star of Bethlehem to guide us to the way of surrender, it arises for us for we seek it out.⁶⁵ Even amidst a holocaust.

But what does “empathizing God” even mean? Surely it cannot be superficial if it occurs even in a holocaust. It involves the believer understanding, participating in, and being changed by the presence of God. But this is not just a symbolic presence (as in consubstantiation or in recollection). Rather it is a *real presence* that affects us (as in transubstantiation or in immediate encounters). Empathy is the means by which “a believer... grasps the love, the anger, and the

⁶³ Dalferth, *Radical Theology*, 243.

⁶⁴ Stein, *The Hidden Life*, 111.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

command of his God...; and God can grasp man's life in no other way.”⁶⁶ Therefore, in “empathizing God,” “empathizing” is *both* a verb and an adjective, and “God” is *both* an object and a subject. This is the truest sort of reflexivity.

Though hermeneutical theology stakes its claim in God’s self-revelation, it overdetermines this self-revelation as *only* subjective, rather than genuinely reflexive. Stein’s philosophy, if she were given due consideration, may have preemptively warned hermeneutical theologians against this. God *as subject* speaks of himself simultaneously *as subject* and *as object*. Therefore, true theology may speak of God as an object, but only to the end of coming to be possessed by God, rather than by one’s own will.

Unmistakably, this is a drastic contrast to the Nietzschean impulse to embrace one’s own will to assert oneself through power. This is largely the case because it does not reduce divine things “to the level of human thought.”⁶⁷ In a sense, Stein’s mystical approach may be taken to be the very thing Nietzsche hates so much about Christianity—“All ideals are dangerous: because they debase and brand the actual; all are poisons, but indispensable as temporary cures.”⁶⁸ The poisonous nature of these virtues and principles, according to Nietzsche, is acquired through their existence in time. Time is a monster to be reckoned with, for him. As I discussed earlier, like Gadamer, Stein does not take time to be an obstacle, but rather a blessing, no matter the unthinkable degree of suffering experience therein. Time is sanctified by the incarnation,

For humankind is the portal through which the Word of God entered into the created world. Human nature has received the Word, and the Word is linked in a special way with human beings, by virtue of a unity of common descent—not with subhuman nature

⁶⁶ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 11.

⁶⁷ Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 150.

⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 130.

and not with angels. As the head of humankind, which combines in itself the higher and the lower reaches of being, Christ is the head of creation in its totality.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

Edith Stein, though Catholic and historically preceding what hitherto has been called “hermeneutical theology,” is a worthy contender for hermeneutical theology. Considering Dalferth’s distinction between theological hermeneutics and hermeneutical theology, Edith Stein’s work serves as a compelling violation of such a distinction. Her philosophy of empathy, along with her robustly Catholic theology and heritage, is the smoking gun of sorts that places her in this transgression.

Her reorientation of theology towards a robust reflexivity sets her in company with the hermeneutical theologians, who emphasize God’s subjectivity in the gift of revelation. However, Stein emphasizes God’s simultaneous subjectivity and objectivity, which is at once in agreement with and in disagreement with the hermeneutical theologians. What this means is not simply “I receive revelation” versus “God give’s revelation to us,” but rather the epistemic ends of revelation, rather than being grasped and essentially mastered by the theologian, the theologian becomes grasped and mastered by the revelation. This is one of the stronger points of agreement between Stein and hermeneutical theology.

Through this schema, Stein expounds on empathizing God. For her, empathy means understanding, participation, and stimulation in the encounter with the other. It is a flux of subjectivity, objectivity, and reflexivity. We are thrown into relation with the other, and this other includes God. Empathizing God refers both to humans empathizing with God—through faith—and God empathizing humanity—through the incarnation. Because of the empathy of

⁶⁹ Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being*, 527.

God, time is sanctified, and no longer an obstacle worth overcoming, nor a monster worth defeating. On the contrary, time, finitude, humanity are blessings, by virtue of the Word of God. While she has hitherto been neglected by hermeneutical theologians, I can only hope that Stein's ideas will be given their due consideration among hermeneutical theologians hereafter.

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