

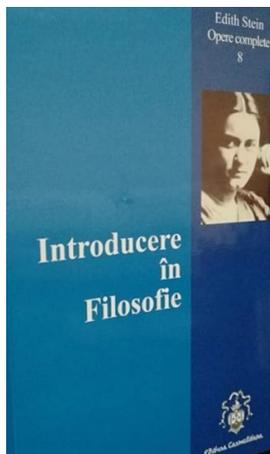
BOOK REVIEWS

Introduction to an *Introduction to Philosophy*

(Edith Stein, *Introducere în filosofie*, trad. de Paul Gabriel Sandu,
Opere complete 8, Editura Carmelitană, 2020)

The title of the book illustrates the protreptic genre, of the invitation to philosophy and seems to have the simplicity of essence. There will be at least two categories of readers interested in it: those who seek to understand the meaning of their existence and the world, from the perspective of the perplexities of their lives, but also those versed in philosophical readings and who have not lost the desire to resume initiation. It is known that introductions to philosophy are not always only introductory, but sometimes involve skillful approaches to prior understanding.

This volume is part of an ambitious project, to translate into Romanian the Complete Works of Edith Stein (1891-1942), an enterprise conceived in twenty volumes, ten of which are already completed. In this case, we are dealing with a posthumously edited manuscript, on which the author worked between 1917 and 1932, a succession of unfinished reflections. Edith Stein traveled a philosophical path marked by the encounter with the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and his first generation of



disciples, but also with the life of Saint Teresa of Avila and the thought of Thomas Aquinas. The introduction to philosophy attests especially the author's interest in phenomenology and less the scholastic turn of her intellectual biography.

The reader interested in phenomenology will find here an actual development of phenomenological thinking, in the wake of Husserl and Scheler, sometimes in parallel with their reflections on topics of knowledge theory and philosophical anthropology. I further propose some ideas of the book, in a subjective selection, in the proximity of Steinian writing.

First about the structure of the volume: The introduction, which deals with the task of philosophy (A) and method (B), is followed by two main parts, The Problems of Natural Philosophy (I) and The Problem of Subjectivity (II). The first part, epistemological, develops around the concept of nature: the description of the phenomenon of nature (a), the science of nature as a philosophical problem (b), the knowledge of nature as a philosophical problem (c), and the second

part around concepts such as subjectivity, consciousness, I, person: consciousness and knowledge of consciousness (a), ontic structure of psycho-physical subjects (b), knowledge of persons (c), sciences of subjectivity (d). One can see from the beginning the rigorous way in which the author approaches the themes of philosophy, in a manner characterized by conceptual precision.

About the hermeneutic circle applied to the introduction to philosophy: "According to a famous word, philosophy cannot be learned, only philosophizing. You can't reach your destination without crossing the road." (p. 2)

About the relationship with Descartes and the absolute foundation of phenomenology: "The field of research of philosophy must be a field of absolute certainty, of irrevocable knowledge. The clearest and most certain perception, in which a thing is given before our eyes, can prove to be a dream or a hallucination. But if philosophy is a field of knowledge beyond any doubt, we will have to "put in parentheses" not only the results of the particular sciences, but everything we know by experience." (pp. 14-15)

About otherness, in a vision that will later oppose it to Husserl: "If we now turn our attention to the stranger and try to describe him, we are forced to say that he is perceived as "directly" as a thing or as and your own person. Just as a thing is present for every act of perception as a whole, in which case we cannot deduce, starting from its facets accessible only implicitly, in the same way we "see" a person with everything that belongs to him, with body and soul, with its current states and its permanent features "(p. 180)

About tradition, a philosophical look: "Through tradition we consider the way of life of the present, insofar as it has its roots in the past; those models of life with which we are born, which we have neither created of our own free will nor have we assimilated rationally. To live in a tradition means to live in community with previous generations. What is important here is how this continuity of the spiritual life comes to be expressed. Since the content of tradition has its origins in past epochs, we live according to these traditional forms without being aware of them (without thematizing them), and without being aware of the fact that they have their origin in the past "(p. 274)

These few excerpts from a text that is not easily tamed and quoted do not aim at the core of Steinian thought, but are simple samples from the laboratory of a phenomenological reflection that deserves to be discovered.

In conclusion, we should mention, as praises, the mediators of this volume, Dr. Claudia Mariéle Wulf from the University of Tilburg, who took care of the German edition, Dr. Oana Șerban from the University of Bucharest, the author of the introduction to the Romanian edition, Fr. Luca Bulgarini OCD and Dr. Lorin Ghiman, who checked the scientific accuracy of the translation and the translator of the volume, Dr. Paul Gabriel Sandu, whose second vocation is to translate such difficult texts from German and who had to pass the Romanian language test philosophical, with all its inherent ambiguities.

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