

Article

What Is Phenomenological Thomism? Its Principles and an Application: The Anthropological Square

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Abstract: In the debates over various kinds and traditions of Thomism, the term “Phenomenological Thomism” does not appear often. However, once uttered, it is instantly linked to two figures: Edith Stein and Karol Wojtyła. In her attempt at contrasting and bringing together Husserl’s phenomenology and the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, the founder of the new approach, Edith Stein, pioneered a philosophy that innovatively united phenomenological and Thomistic methods. This article analyses the essential features of her method, proposing to call it “Phenomenological Thomism”. In order to demonstrate the internal logic of this approach, I apply it to one topic, that of the human being, construing the Anthropological Square. The thesis of the article holds that Phenomenological Thomism is sui generis, yet not an estranged tradition in the history of philosophy.

Keywords: Phenomenological Thomism; Edith Stein; Anthropological Square; phenomenology; Thomism; faith and reason



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1. Introduction: What Does “Phenomenological Thomism” Refer to?

The character of Edith Stein’s major works written between 1921 and 1942 (Stein 2003, 2004a, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c) has been the subject of many debates concerning its adequate categorisation. It seems indisputable that, up until the early 20th century, Stein was a realist phenomenologist (see Stein 2004b, 2006b, 2008, 2010), yet the works written since she became a translator and commentator of Thomas Aquinas, specifically between 1929 and 1942, evoked opposing classifications. Some commentators claimed that the works are partially Aristotelian–Thomistic and partially mystical (Machnacz 1998, p. 44; see Guerrero van der Meijden 2019, p. 69). The early reception of Stein’s works additionally classified them as a departure from earlier realistic phenomenology (Stein 1962, pp. xi–xii; Ingarden 1971, p. 399), while others classified them as part phenomenological ontology, part philosophical anthropology, part political and feminist works, and part spiritual and theological (Szanto and Moran 2020). Finally, the editors of *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe* see them as part phenomenological–ontological, part pedagogical–anthropological, and even part spiritual–mystical (Gerl-Falkovitz 2000, pp. 11–15; Machnacz 2008, pp. 207–23). Various other categorisations occur as well (Lembeck 1999, pp. 125–40; Orzechowski 2018, pp. 315–28; Stallmach 1999, pp. 113–24), to name only *philosophia perennis*, one used by the author herself (Stein 2006a, pp. 13, 15), and “a synthesis of phenomenology with a number of earlier classical-philosophical traditions” used in more recent studies (Guerrero van der Meijden 2019, pp. 24–25, 66–74).

What is lacking from all these debates is one uniformed category to identify Stein’s method of inquiry that she implemented after the year 1929. This article attempts to offer such a unifying category, which I propose to call “Phenomenological Thomism”. I examine how it is implemented by its pioneer, argue why the category is apt (Sections 2, 3, 5 and 6), why it was rejected before (Section 4), and demonstrate its validity and actuality by presenting one application, the Anthropological Square (Section 8).

2. Thomism and Phenomenology

It seems indisputable that the early Edith Stein—that is, the one before her baptism on 1 January 1921—was a classical realist–phenomenologist of the school of the early Husserl and Adolf Reinach (Gerl-Falkovitz 2000, pp. 11–15; Guerrero van der Meijden 2019, pp. 49–66; Machnacz 1999, pp. 53–72). Equally certain is the fact that she called herself “a reverent and willing pupil of Thomas Aquinas” (Stein 2006a, p. 3), was his translator and commentator, and considered Thomism, next to phenomenology, one of the two most promising philosophies of her time. Additionally, it is merely a matter of observation that since her encounter with the Christian tradition, Stein drew from a number of classical authors: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine of Hippo, Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross—and one can detect ideas stemming from the 12th-century School of St. Victor in her writings. Drawing on these three unquestionable premises, I propose to call her philosophy after 1929 “Phenomenological Thomism” and suggest to differentiate it from all other kinds and traditions of both phenomenology and Thomism.

3. Thesis: Phenomenological Thomism as a *Sui Generis* Category

Phenomenological Thomism can be distinguished from all other kinds of Thomism and phenomenology for at least three interrelated reasons. One, it possesses unique characteristics not to be reduced to any other philosophical tradition, neither phenomenological nor Thomistic. Two, there are historical occurrences of this kind of philosophical endeavour in the mainstream continental European academic tradition, distinct from all other kinds of Thomism and phenomenology: they are the works of Edith Stein, partially Karol Wojtyła, and a number of lesser-known phenomenologists following in Stein’s or Wojtyła’s footsteps. As they constitute a separate group of writings, they comprise a distinct historical phenomenon. Three, some historians of philosophy identified these occurrences and the distinctiveness of their method. In addition, it is worth noting that all the philosophical implications of the original features of Phenomenological Thomism have not been worked out in all their theoretical potential, specifically in relation to the intersection of faith and science, which is significant from the perspective of the development of a number of disciplines, prime among which is philosophy, but not exclusively. Let us discuss these topics in more detail.

4. Not-Thomism or Not-Phenomenology

In relation to the first point, let us ask: why cannot Phenomenological Thomism be reduced to either phenomenology or Thomism? Stein (2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2014a; 2014b) herself admitted to drawing on both traditions and demonstrated familiarity with them; however, some Thomists and some phenomenologists have ruled out the Steinian method past the year 1929 from their respective philosophies, concentrating on the specific elements of their approaches which they saw as crucial and which she had dismissed.

To illustrate this point, let us observe that the early reception of Edith Stein by some German phenomenologists suggested that Stein departed from phenomenology by abandoning the principle of presuppositionlessness. Husserl argued that philosophy should be scientific insofar as it is committed to building a fully justified body of knowledge and thus questions even the most natural and common-sensical claims about reality (Husserl 2021; Zahavi 2003, pp. 44–45). Hence, he postulated a radical philosophical practice of *epoche* from the natural attitude towards reality and opted for maximal presuppositionlessness in phenomenological inquiry. Following an *epoche*, the second phase of transcendental reduction is performed—the transcendental reduction itself (Zahavi 2003, p. 46; Sokolowski 2000, pp. 58–59), which analyses the phenomenon in question and its way of presentations using a number of distinctions: noema and noesis, originary and non-originary, a priori and a posteriori, the hyletic and the formal (Moran and Cohen 2012, pp. 40–44, 127, 150–51, 222–24). Husserl’s presuppositionlessness was questioned in respect to its consistency (Durfee 1983, p. 260; Reed-Downing 1990), and it is worth adding that as a convert to

Protestantism, Husserl did not dismiss faith as invalid in principle or irrational, yet he saw no place for the premises derived from Revelation in his phenomenological system, leaving their investigation to theologians.

From this, Husserl's student and a personal friend of Edith Stein, a Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden, concluded that Edith Stein's works past the year 1921 departed not only from phenomenology but also from science and a "rational theology". He wrote: "This is not practicing theology in a form of, so to speak, a rational theology [...]. Here, at this very moment, the distinction is blurred between her philosophical position and that which undoubtedly no longer belongs to the philosopher but to some theology. [...] Perhaps this is a certain finality, tragic in a certain sense for the author, [...] namely that she has given up doing philosophy in this way, as Husserl always put forward as a banner, and which she also accepted, completely accepted" (Ingarden 1971, p. 399). Early in Stein's reception, some other German phenomenologists expressed similar concerns regarding her belonging to the phenomenological tradition after her conversion. Ingarden himself, despite officially belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, in respect to faith, presented a view foreign to Husserl, one that can be classified as scientist in respect to faith or simply anticlerical: religion is merely a "dogmatic apparatus invented to control the masses", and the great teachers of faith, presumably the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, are "either idiots or clever defrauders" (Stein 2005c, p. 153).

Secondly, a number of Thomists expressed negative opinions about Stein's works belonging to Thomism, suggesting—at times quite condescendingly—that she did not comprehend the basics of the Thomistic approach (Gogacz 1984, pp. 191–92; Stepa 1933, pp. 296–97). In 1933, a Polish bishop, professor of philosophy in Lwów, and declared Thomist, Jan Stepa, published a first review of Stein's German translation of *De veritate*—the first translation of this work into German in history. Stepa's reserve and criticism are implicit, yet evident: he never even mentions the name of a translator in his short review except for the title, yet he names "one of the greatest specialists in Thomas", Martin Grabmann, who wrote an introduction to Stein's translation, and claims that because of Grabmann the book "possesses some value" (Stepa 1933, p. 297). Stepa (1933, p. 297) observed no "historical-philological value" in Stein's translation but found some excuse for this in the work's purpose of popularising Thomas's ideas. The review marks the first mention of the name "Edith Stein" in Polish publications, but also one of the first critical stances towards Stein by a Thomist.

After World War II, upon reading small parts of Stein's *opus magnum*, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein*, another Polish Thomist and professor of philosophy, Mieczysław Gogacz, wrote: "There is much to worry about with Edith Stein's views. She presses St. Thomas's metaphysics first into Scotism, then into the simplifications of phenomenology, and finally intertwines metaphysics with theology. [...] And too easily does she recognise the image of the Trinity in the structure of being, as if precisely metaphysics and theology were the same thing. [...] How imprecise, how incoherent and how inconsistent are the approaches [...] of Edith Stein!" (Gogacz 1984, pp. 191–92). As we see, Gogacz could agree with Ingarden about Stein's supposed confusion between the philosophical and theological, a point most often misunderstood in Stein's approach (Rojek 2023). As an influential figure in the Thomistic tradition, he set the tone of a continued dismissal of Edith Stein by the contributors to Thomistic philosophy.

5. An Intermediate View

More recently, however, specialists have argued that Stein's works written after the year 1929 and until her death are phenomenological (Machnacz 1999; Olejniczak 2010; Szanto and Moran 2020), and historians of philosophy classify them as Thomistic (Lebech 2013; Machnacz 1998). Sound arguments have been presented for doing so, pointing out the phenomenological and Thomistic elements of her thought (Baseheart 1960; Berkman 2019; Gleeson 2015; Volek 2016; Borden-Sharkey 2012; Gricoski 2020).

In view of such a conundrum of opposite views, I would like to agree, perhaps surprisingly, with all the presented standpoints. I do so by arguing that Phenomenological Thomism is neither just Thomism nor just phenomenology, for it is both at once: a mixture, not an aggregate. This is similar to how Thomas Aquinas claimed that the unity of, e.g., wine in water is not merely an aggregate of the two elements in which they maintain their respective characteristics (alike how a heap of sand and rocks is an aggregate of both in which they preserve their respective original properties and can be separated back into the original two substances, forming merely *unitas compositionis*), but a mixture that produces a new, third whole—a unity of the two (wine and water merge into a new whole with properties different from the original features of each substance and its substantial form) (*Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem* III, cap. 5, ad 4.; *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 17, a. 4, corp.). So does Phenomenological Thomism constitute a new philosophy, neither purely Thomistic nor purely phenomenological, but one that draws on the key features of both Thomism and phenomenology, blending them into Phenomenological Thomism.

Good reasons suggest a harmonious cooperation between Thomistic and phenomenological ways of philosophising: both philosophies are objective-reality orientated; validate reason; accept objective truths; draw from experience; proclaim essentialism; perceive personhood as the highest form of being; observe the axiological component of the world as either kinds of good (*bonum*) with its opposite—evil (*malum*)—or the various types of values; identify the axiological experience in human perception of the world; operate with classical philosophical categories such as the opposition of the hyletic (material) and formal or the abstract and concrete, etc. Moreover, each of these philosophies excel in a different, yet complementary form of analysis—phenomenology excels in description, whereas Thomism excels in explanation. This suggests their cooperation could be particularly potent. Nonetheless, can we classify Stein’s mature philosophy as both phenomenological and Thomistic?

When drawn out on Venn diagrams (Figure 1), some forms of Thomism and some forms of phenomenology contain elements not implemented by Stein, yet the intersection between some significant features of both Thomism and phenomenology occurs—precisely as Edith Stein’s novel philosophy, accepting all the above-listed common approaches. The argument holds even if various kinds of Thomism and various kinds of phenomenology were marked by “domino resemblance”, in Tatarkiewicz’s (1933, pp. 5–7) terms, or “family resemblance”, in Wittgenstein’s (2002, pp. 17–20) terms, in which various objects do not share one common essential feature but a series of overlapping similarities among which there is no single one to be shared by all of them (Blackburn 1994, 296–97). A consideration of various attempts at systematising kinds of Thomism (essential Thomism, existential Thomism or Lublin School Thomism, Cracow School Thomism, Analytical Thomism, Transcendental Thomism, Louvain’s Thomism, the so-called School Thomism taught at many seminaries in the 20th century, etc.) and phenomenology (in the forms implemented by Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Roman Ingarden, Jan Patočka, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Mircea Eliade, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and many others) demonstrates their considerable variety (Kerr 2002; De Santis et al. 2021). Provided there are metaphysicians accepting core Thomistic principles yet who are atheist, one could argue that the overall outlook on Thomistic philosophies manifests a lack of a common denominator and hence their similarity to the kinds of games Wittgenstein analysed. Regardless of whether this is true, the intersection between phenomenological and Thomistic philosophies occurs in both Stein’s and later Wojtyła’s thought.

Phenomenological Thomism comprises a new category of philosophy in the two groups of those sets, one neither purely Thomistic nor purely phenomenological but Thomistic–phenomenological. Such a philosophy could be called Phenomenological Thomism or Thomistic Phenomenology, yet when designating it, the prior category proves to be more effective for the simple reason that there have been more kinds of Thomism differentiated by historians than kinds of distinctively new methods in phenomenology. Both

designations are, nevertheless, appropriate in naming Edith Stein's theoretical endeavours after the year 1929.

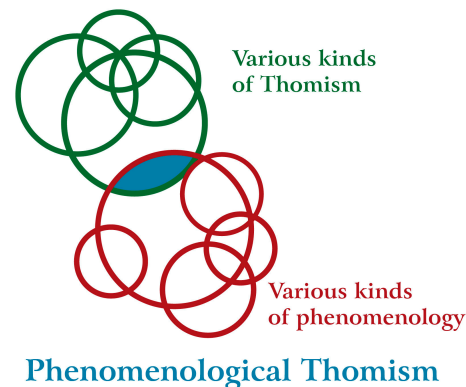


Figure 1. Venn diagram describing the distinctiveness of Phenomenological Thomism.

6. Why Both Phenomenology and Thomism?

I have already stated that commentators identify both the phenomenological and Thomistic methods in Stein's works written since 1929. Firstly, indeed, sound arguments were put forward for the case that all the stages of Stein's reflection were phenomenological. Most evidently, Stein's major works written in the 1930s, *Potenz und Akt* and *Endliches und Ewiges Sein*, were declared by her as an attempt to bring together phenomenology and the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. The entire two volumes fuse Thomistic teaching with phenomenological analysis, and their method has been investigated in a number of studies (Baseheart 1960; Machnacz 1998; Berkman 2019; Lebech 2013; Gleeson 2015; Volek 2016; Borden-Sharkey 2012; Gricoski 2020). The phenomenological method and Stein's already worked-out phenomenological conclusions were combined by her with both Thomistic methods and teachings. Additionally, some argue that Edith Stein's entire corpus of works is not marked by any radical change in standpoint, and one argument points precisely to the continuity of application of the phenomenological analysis evident even in her last work, *Kreuzeswissenschaft* (Guerrero van der Meijden 2019, pp. 66–74). Stein's main philosophical education was phenomenological, and it entailed marginal elements of any other approach. It is thus not surprising that even her last work, dedicated to the legacy of the 16th-century mystic John of the Cross, employs phenomenological analysis and terminology (e.g., an "I", unknown to the 16th-century Carmelite who utilised mainly Scholastic terminology). Another argument showing that Stein never abandoned phenomenology relates to her continuous work on an introduction to phenomenology, *Einführung in die Philosophie*: she started to work on it when teaching phenomenology at a proseminar in Freiburg (1920–1921), and the manuscript of the works witnesses further continued work (Gelber 1991, p. 8). This manuscript was found in Stein's cell just after her arrest, seven days prior to her death in Auschwitz-Birkenau, suggesting that she worked on it, reread it, or used it in her work on *Kreuzeswissenschaft* up until her arrest. After 1929, Stein wrote other smaller works discussing phenomenology, often in comparison to Thomas's philosophy: *Was ist Philosophie? Ein Gespräch zwischen Edmund Husserl und Thomas von Aquino*, *Husserls Phänomenologie und die Philosophie des hl. Thomas von Aquino*, *Die weltanschauliche Bedeutung der Phänomenologie*, and *Erkenntnis, Wahrheit, Sein* (Stein 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d). In 1931 she also positively reacted to an offer from professor Josef Koch, a future founder of the Thomistic Institute in Cologne, to teach a course on the phenomenological foundations of sciences at the University of Breslau. Due to historical circumstances and Stein's ethnicity, the idea was doomed to fail, yet her eagerness to take on the task suggests an ongoing dedication to phenomenology (Stein 2000, pp. 180–82). Thus, to paraphrase a proverb, one can get a student out of a school but not a school out

of a student—Edith Stein continued to use the method she was educated in throughout her life.

The case of Stein's belonging in some way to the Thomist tradition is just as straightforward. Stein openly admitted to being “a reverent and willing student”, *ehrfürchtige und willige Schülerin*, of St. Thomas Aquinas (Stein 2006a, p. 3); wrote a kind of *summa* like his (Stein 2006a), preceded by an extensive work of similar character (2005a); and in both these *summae* as well as in earlier works written in or after 1929, specifically two volumes on anthropology, she implemented, discussed, or re-evaluated numerous anthropological, angelological, Trinitarian, and ontological points worked out by Thomas Aquinas. When in 1931 she published her translation of *De veritate*, the author of the introduction, a Thomist himself, Martin Grabmann, situated her approach—apparent not only in the translation but also in the introductions to the articles or their summaries—among Thomisms.

7. Key Characteristics of Phenomenological Thomism

Let us now ask what is Phenomenological Thomism in detail, that is, what are its core principles, resulting from integrating phenomenology with Thomas's philosophy. Key characteristics of Phenomenological Thomism include the following:

- (1) Firstly, it draws from the philosophical method or the conclusions of realistic phenomenology and from the Scholastic method, as well as from teachings of Thomas Aquinas, who, in turn, drew on the classical philosophical and theological authorities of his times.
- (2) Secondly, in Phenomenological Thomism, this drawing is based the principle of the integrality of knowledge available from various relevant sciences.
- (3) Thirdly, Phenomenological Thomism preserves the autonomous right of each discipline to offer its data according to the best method accepted within it. The validity of the method and results of a particular study is to be verified according to the rules accepted by the specialists in the relevant discipline or disciplines, as opposed to one discipline dictating to another which of their methods or results are valid and which are dismissible.
- (4) Fourthly, the rule of autonomy pertains specifically to theology with its *depositum fidei* and *certitudo fidei* principles, since theology offers unique sets of truths about the world absent from all other academic disciplines. In the case of theology, the principle of autonomy means that its truths are offered as the results achieved by the relevant expert in the field. In recognition of points (1) and (3), a Phenomenological Thomist will—in an attempt to collect data from theology—adhere to the leading authorities of Christianity, today categorised as the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church, as well as the Magisterial documents of the Church. However, when not relevant, theological data need not be implemented into a phenomenological–Thomistic study.
- (5) Fifthly, the rule of autonomy does not dismiss the idea of a meta-discipline—philosophy—whose special role is to integrate as well as compare and investigate the premises, conclusions, assumptions, and methods of other disciplines. As such, philosophy plays a unifying and dialogical role among the sciences. In doing so, it returns to its medieval role of *aliarum omnium rector et regulatrix*, a leader or regulator of all other sciences (though not in the sense of dictating what they must claim), and the philosopher, to his duty of ordering knowledge: *sapientis est ordinare* (Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae*, prooemium). Clearly, the idea of integrality of knowledge faces the complexity of various monotheistic and polytheistic religions' narrations about God; nonetheless, in its original, Central European form, Phenomenological Thomism relies on the Catholic theology taught at most academic centres in Europe. In being *rectrix et regulatrix aliarum*, philosophy—in the form practiced by a Phenomenological Thomist—does not invalidate the premises of theology or any other science but respects their expertise and orders their claims in relation to one another, as was practiced by Edith Stein, such as in relation to the science of evolution and the biblical claims about human creation.

- (6) Sixthly, such construed Phenomenological Thomism leads to the amplification of reason (Italian *ampliato*, German *Erweiterung*), desired by some leading theologians (Francis 2017; Benedict XVI 2007) and philosophers (Husserl 1954; MacIntyre 2007) of our times. The need for an integral outlook at the sciences has been at the heart of phenomenologists' concerns, specifically in Husserl's 1936 work *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. Phenomenological Thomism continues this tradition of attempting to integrate knowledge available from the various academic disciplines by the application of both the leading methods of phenomenological inquiry (transcendental and eidetic reductions) and the Thomistic approach, yet in dialogue with the outcomes of the relevant sciences, including the exact sciences.

Thus, Phenomenological–Thomistic philosophy does not merely use natural reason and voluntarily dismiss all premises derived from Revelation. It treats theology as an autonomous discipline, whose outcomes are not prone to the reductive tendency of the “natural” theology accepted in some traditions of Thomism: to willingly refrain from the premises derived from faith (Brent 2023). Phenomenological Thomism, with its conclusions, remains open to rational investigation, the basis of all science (cf. Stein 2006a, p. 36). Thus, anyone can apply Phenomenological Thomism without being forced into the attitude of belief.

By respecting the autonomy of theology and other disciplines, Phenomenological Thomism might seem to depart from the Husserlian principle of presuppositionlessness and, as described, has been seen in that way. Stein's approach, however, maintains presuppositionlessness in its own way—by demanding the non-biased approach to theology as one of the accepted academic disciplines, whose outcomes cannot be arbitrarily dismissed by non-specialists in the field. Additionally, being phenomenological, Phenomenological Thomism can offer an adequate description of the phenomenon of faith (Stein 2014e, pp. 8–72). Thus, the endeavour of construing an integral body of knowledge, taken up in Phenomenological Thomism, reclaims the positive effect of the interdisciplinary outlook on the world or the phenomena in it, inclusive of the phenomenon of faith.

Let us now take a close look at the first application of Phenomenological Thomism by its pioneer, Edith Stein, in order to illustrate the description just offered.

8. Edith Stein's Application: The Anthropological Square

As stated, Stein treated the outcomes of science seriously; consequently, she was able to work out novel solutions, such as in 1932 in anthropology by pioneering a stance towards the evolutionary theory that anticipated the solution that John Paul II presented as the official standpoint of the Catholic Church (Stein 2004a, pp. 57–78; John Paul II 1986). On the other hand, she also treated the teachings of theology, in particular, dogmatics, as relevant to anthropology, arguing that the theory of the human being described by natural reason ought to be measured against the relevant claims of theology, specifically Christology and sacramentology (Stein 2004a, p. 26; 2005b). In doing so, Stein (2004a, 2005c) worked out an integral vision of the human being that validated both the scientific and theological visions of humanity, finding an adequate place for each set of anthropological claims. In order to do so, she reached for the ancient concept of a microcosm, structuring her argument according to the logic of the notion first used by Aristotle, but known to her from Thomas Aquinas or Max Scheler (Guerrero van der Meijden 2019, pp. 155–64).

The result is a paradigm of thinking about the human being that integrates knowledge from all the sciences by establishing what the human being is in his belonging to each of the four kingdoms of being: the material, plant, animal, and personal. One can graphically represent Stein's attempt in the form of a square, as she identified four main classes of beings and correlated them with relevant sciences. The design results in an Anthropological Square (Figure 2). This holistic approach allows Stein to argue that anthropology can lead in many directions and should incorporate data from various sciences: physics because human beings are pieces of matter, medicine and biology for they are organic and animal,

human sciences for they are personal, etc. Her argumentation, moreover, is designed to lead to the unveiling of a personalist distinction by showing what a human being has in common with each of the aforementioned types of beings and what differentiates him from them (Stein 2004a, pp. 29–30). Using such an interpretative key, Stein analysed the belonging of the human being to each of these four classes, asking in turn what the human being is as a thing, as a plant, as an animal, and as a person, as well as what distinguishes the human being from these types of objects, that is, things, plants, animals, and non-human persons. In order to provide an exhaustive answer to the questions about the first three kingdoms, Stein drew on the results of the empirical sciences, in particular the theory of evolution innovatively analysed by her in dialogue with the Aristotelian theory of species forms. As stated, her results anticipate solutions offered by John Paul II some five decades later, and this was achieved in 1932 merely because of the Phenomenological–Thomistic aspiration to offer an integral philosophy respecting the outcomes of all relevant academic disciplines.

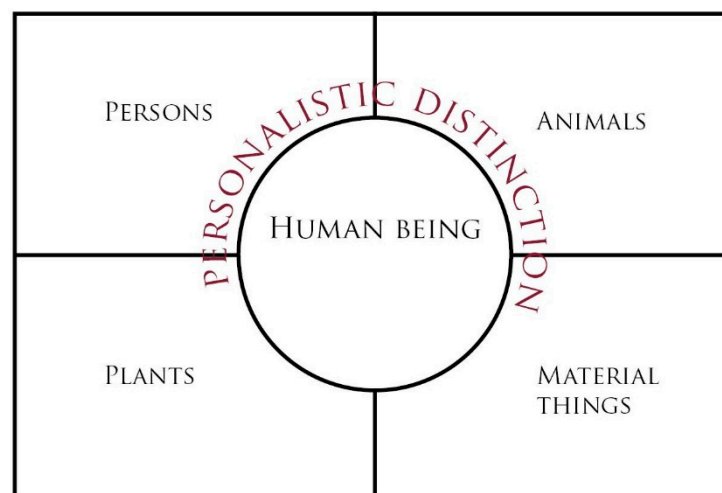


Figure 2. The Anthropological Square worked out based on Edith Stein’s lectures on philosophical anthropology.

Stein (2006a, p. 31) herself listed some positive effects of incorporating the results of the theology into the scientific debate, arguing that the analysis of the distinction between God and creation helped work out the distinction between essence and existence; the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, with the distinction between the person and his nature; and the teachings of the Eucharist, with the difference between substance and accidents. For this reason, she maintained the principle of autonomy, specifically in relation to theology.

9. Was Phenomenological Thomism Short-Lived?

Phenomenological Thomism is not limited to its once pioneering application. John Paul II’s synthesis of phenomenology and Thomism comprises a continuation of Stein’s enterprise, and it is no surprise that Stein and Wojtyła shared strikingly similar intellectual formations: both followed Husserl’s phenomenology, Scheler’s value-theory, and John of the Cross’s spirituality and personalism; were well read in European literature; remained multi-linguists; and in general exemplified a broad kind of 20th-century humanism, writing poetry and plays (Guerrero van der Meijden 2020, p. 107). Even though Wojtyła’s work is most often called “personalist-Thomistic” and not “phenomenological-Thomistic”, and he himself wrote about Personalist Thomism (Wojtyła 1961), the method of his approach remains consistent with that of Stein (Kunicka 2017). Propositions of merging Thomism and phenomenology were discussed in the Lublin School (Stępień 1999, 2001, 2015; Andrzejczuk 2016), and comparisons between phenomenology and Thomism perplexed some French Thomists, too (Geiger [1932] 2022). This demonstrates the hidden conceptual potential of that particular intersection of phenomenology and Thomism, one yet undeveloped.

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