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Towards resilience: an approach from Edith Stein's personal letters

Hacia la resiliencia: una aproximación desde las cartas personales de Edith Stein

CLAUDIA MARIÉLE WULF¹

*International Association for the Study of the
Philosophy of Edith Stein (IASPES), Dublin (Ireland)
Saint Paul University, Ottawa (Canada)*

ID ORCID 0000-0002-8665-0260

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¹ (mariele.wulf@bluewin.ch) Dr. phil., Dr. theol. habil., MA in education, was professor of moral theology in Tilburg/NL and professor of Safeguarding in Ottawa/CA. She runs a praxis of pastoral counselling in St. Gallen/CH. Her monographs focus on philosophical-phenomenological anthropology/human dignity, moral-theological subjects, epistemology, psychotrauma and narcissism (in the context of professional ethics). She is an international expert on Edith Stein and her newest research focusses on physical, psychological, ideological, spiritual and structural abuse and how to fight it by safeguarding. His publications include: (2022). "Is" and "Ought" Reconciled. In: Andrews, M.F., Calcagno, A. (eds) Ethics and Metaphysics in the Philosophy of Edith Stein. Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences, vol 12. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91198-0_10 (2022). Gegen Fundamentalismus und Ausgrenzung Selbstvergewisserung als Ausgangspunkt für Akzeptanz und Dialog. In book: Europa (neu) erzählen (275-294). <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748928645-275>

ABSTRACT: The term “resilience” suffers the fate of all terms that are used in an inflationary manner: They lose meaning and explosiveness. This article aims to give the term back its fullness by means of a phenomenological view according to Stein’s eidetic phenomenology. For this purpose, Edith Stein’s resilience, which distinguished her as a person, will be analysed. In addition, the way in which she fostered and shaped resilience in others will be highlighted. The concept of competence is used for the analysis. Four core competencies describe the sources of psychological resilience: self-competence, other-competence, fact-competence and meaning-competence, because resilience is formed in an adequate relationship to myself, to others or to otherness, to reality and to meaning.

These competencies are each presented in Edith Stein’s life, in her support of others and in their relevance for the formation of resilience. The analysis keeps Stein’s philosophical or theological views in mind, but draws on her letters to individuals. One can state that in order to make sense of life, even of the adversities in life, the perspective of meaning is needed in all individual competences. Stein can even find the connection to meaning competence in the fact competence. She sees it also in the orientation towards others and in the understanding for them. Self-competence must also flow into meaning-competence; then we become able to face life adequately. This is ultimately the ability of the resilient person.

KEYWORDS: accompagnement, competence, meaning, phenomenology, resilience.

RESUMEN: El término “resiliencia” sufre el destino de todos los términos utilizados de manera inflacionaria: pierden significado y fuerza. Este artículo pretende devolver al término su plenitud mediante una mirada fenomenológica de acuerdo con la fenomenología eidética de Stein. Con este propósito, se analizará la resiliencia de Edith Stein, que la distinguió como persona. Además, se destacará la forma en que fomentó y modeló la resiliencia en los demás. Para el análisis se utiliza el concepto de competencia. Cuatro competencias fundamentales describen las fuentes de la resiliencia psicológica: competencia personal, competencia interpersonal, competencia fáctica y competencia de sentido, ya que la resiliencia se forma en una relación adecuada conmigo mismo, con los demás o con la alteridad, con la realidad y con el sentido.

Cada una de estas competencias se presenta en la vida de Edith Stein, en su apoyo a los demás y en su relevancia para la formación de la resiliencia. El análisis mantiene presentes las perspectivas filosóficas y teológicas de Stein, pero se basa en sus cartas personales. Puede afirmarse que, para dar sentido a la vida, incluso a sus adversidades, es necesaria la perspectiva del sentido en todas las competencias individuales. Stein logra encontrar la conexión con la competencia de sentido incluso dentro de la competencia fáctica. También la percibe en la orientación hacia los demás y en la

comprensión de ellos. La competencia personal debe, asimismo, integrarse en la competencia de sentido; solo entonces somos capaces de afrontar la vida de manera adecuada. Esta es, en última instancia, la capacidad de la persona resiliente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: acompañamiento, competencia, fenomenología, resiliencia, significado.

1. THE BASIC CONCEPT: RESILIENCE

1.1. Resilience – a phenomenological sketch

The literature on resilience is growing exponentially; the term is used excessively. Here is a brief phenomenological look at it: “Resilience” is understood to mean “mental power to resist”. If we look at the Latin origin “*resilire*”, the verb means: to bounce back, to rebound, not to cling. Mental resilience gives a person the ability to let something bounce off him/her so that it cannot stick, or to bounce back, i.e. to move out of the field when something threatens him/her. Thus, a double movement can be discerned: the rejection of the negative or the possibility of avoiding it. However, this requires a force that does not come from outside but from within, a force that moves or removes the other or by means of which one moves oneself out of the danger zone.² In addition, resilience requires an adequate, i.e. competent handling of the respective influence. One approaches the problem³, chooses a problem-solving strategy and implements it in such a way that a meaningful and relatively lasting solution is achieved.

This shows the connection between resilience and competence. From a phenomenological point of view, “competence” is the ability of a person to deal adequately with a situation or task or to find adequate means or help for it. Accordingly, resilience is the competence to deal adequately with damag-

² Classically, this is described as *fight* and *flight*. When *freeze* sets in, the power of resilience has collapsed. The same can be said of depressive moods or withdrawal strategies that avoid problem-solving, while flight from danger is entirely appropriate.

³ An overly aggressive reaction is also inadequate. The attitude of “*aggredi*” of approaching a problem in order to learn to deal with it, is again correct.

ing influences or to find means or help to address the problem. This implies a threefold relationship

- the reference to one's own person (ability),
- the reference to others, who may be problematic or act in a problematic way due to their alterity. In this case, one must be able to deal with this alterity. But others can also support and intervene in a helping way.
- The relationship to things, to the situation and to the possible means of help.

If these relations are carried out adequately, the situation and finally life turn out to be meaningful.

1.2. Stein on resilience

The term “resilience” was not yet on everyone's lips in Stein's time. But she is familiar with the phenomenon that she notices in her friends. She coined the term “robustness”⁴ or “resistibility” for it. In both cases, it is a question of whether someone is able to cope with a situation emotionally, or is threatened by it, or is unable to cope with it, precisely because one lacks the mental resistance.⁵

2. TOWARDS SELF-COMPETENCE

Self-competence is, according to the previous observation, the adequate handling of oneself: One can deal with the adversities of one's own state of mind,

⁴ See Stein, 20.V.1918: “Ingarden (Krakow, Krupnicza 28) is currently applying for a position at the State Grammar Schools in Warsaw. I am very sad about this, because with his low resistance [“Widerstandskraft], the ev. can take all his strength.” The letters will be quoted Stein plus date.

⁵ See Stein, 8.XI.1919: “I knew very well that his mental resilience would not be enough to bear the blows in Lorettostrasse. He suffers so namelessly from every “unjust circumstance”, and there one runs up against such things at every step. That's why I wanted to prevent him from going to Freiburg without a ready-made habilitation thesis. Now I'm afraid he won't go back, even if he's still determined to do so. I wonder if good old Lipps will ever get a moment's peace. You can see so clearly what he is missing, and at the same time that there is no way to help. And yet you would like to so terribly.”

character, and life circumstances in such a way that one's life is perceived or changed in a meaningful way.

2.1. Edith Stein's self-competence

The basis for self-competence is a pronounced introspection, the inner awareness of oneself. According to Stein, this leads to "serious self-examination" (Stein, 25.I.1920.). By applying this, Stein becomes aware of her depressive side and signals to Kaufmann that she understands him: Depressive moods must not become brooding; that makes the situation worse (Stein, 25.I.1920). Stein knows that her nervous system is not very resilient; what she can nevertheless accomplish, she attributes to grace (Stein, 9.VIII.1936). One thus also becomes aware of one's own character traits. Stein notes that she is shy on the one hand, but courageous on the other (Stein, 16.VII.1916). Good self-reflection is also the source of healthy self-distance, which manifests itself, for example, in humour.

Stein is very self-critical; she mentions several times that she feels overestimated, stating for example that she is "by no means a saint" (Stein, 23.7.1918). She feels overtaxed in her scientific tasks (Stein 11.12.1932; 24.II.1933, and 4.XI.1934), partly because she was excluded from scientific collaboration for years (Stein, 9.VI.1932). But Stein also knows that she sometimes fails in interpersonal contact because she is too critical of others and is therefore considered "megalomaniac" (Stein, 25.I.1920). Despite her intellectuality, Stein is emotionally very touchable; she stands by this and thus shows a deeply human quality (Stein, 27.IX.1936).

2.2. Stein forming Self-competence

During her time in Speyer, Stein begins to accompany people to an increasing extent. In doing so, she shows a deep psychological understanding, even if it is only about professional corrections. Fritz Kaufmann points out to her that he should not expel himself from philosophical work – or else ask himself whether it really corresponds to his talent. Stein states that someone forc-

ing oneself to do something against one's natural vocation will not find "real satisfaction" and will run the risk of falling into depression (Stein, 3.X.1919). A person accepting his/her nature proves clear insight into his/her own limit and into the limits of the willingness to change. For in fact a person will only change out of one's depth, not through argumentation; the counsellor will only be able help others if they allow a glimpse into their innermost being (Stein, 6.I.1927).

This presupposes a multiple self-reflection: on one's character and the possibilities and limits of one's own talent. Stein stimulates this and proves to be a clear, confrontational, but ultimately supportive advisor to one student (Stein, without date 1930). In another case, Stein encourages self-criticism of one's own motivation. She concludes: "Whatever your decision may be, I sincerely hope that it will turn out well for you" (Stein, 8.I.1931). With this she guides to constructive meaning finding, because who knows the meaning will not rise "pharisaically" above others (Stein, 16.VI.1931). After all, everyone has limits, one has to accept and learn to live with it.

Edith Stein is primarily concerned with encouraging all persons she accompanies: that even the "ugly duckling" learns to hope for its great future – trusting in itself and in divine grace (Stein, 17.VIII.1931). It is a testimony to Stein's healthy self-confidence that she also acts as an advisor to her colleagues. She even urges the famous philosopher Peter Wust to have more self-confidence (Stein, 30.III.1934). Although Stein later refers more to divine power in oneself, self-competence remains crucial for accepting this grace –even for the grace of religious vocation. Stein does not transcend human nature – a "bunny" does not simply become a "lion" (Stein, 4.XII.1937); but within the bounds of one's possibilities, the individual must cooperate with grace.

2.3. Self-competence and resilience

Stein thus addresses attitudes that promote resilience and form its basis for adequate self-competence. One of them is honest and serious self-reflection. The goal is to achieve deeper self-knowledge through self-criticism. This has

a preventive effect: those who know their possibilities and limits, their own talents and character, will look for the right tasks and not expose themselves to unnecessarily overstraining situations, or will ask for help in the corresponding situations in good time.

On a deeper level, emotions and value-feeling contribute to resilience as they show what is of value and thus motivating. Clarity about one's own motivation prevents possible self-deception, especially moral self-deception. Radical transparency and honesty towards companions are the best weapon in this respect. Companions can be a positive and critical mirror and thus provide adequate help and goal-oriented guidance.

Encouragement for self-development helps to overcome obstacles.

Nevertheless, Stein maintains a clear realism and sobriety as a counsellor. She builds trust, but also stimulates the will to change; under certain circumstances she can even demand both. Clear demands help to achieve clarity about oneself, but also about the situation: Those who are given the confidence to master a situation are more likely to do so. This is how personal competence and thus resilience develop.

3. TOWARDS A COMPETENCE OF THE OTHER/OTHERNESS

In the following, I will use the term "*other-competence*". This means the ability to understand and respect others in their otherness which includes the ability to enter into a relationship with the other (social competence). Above all, supportive relationships promote resilience. There is, as seen, a clear connection between social relationships and self-competence. On the other hand, self-competence allows adequate other-competence. Edith Stein, for example, has the greatness to admit to her colleague that she had behaved wrongly toward him because she herself was not well at the time in question. The relationship was thus disturbed by *her* problems; it was not the fault of the colleague (Stein, 13.IX.1925). Stein thanked the same colleague for his openness, which stemmed from *his* personal competence; due to his trust Stein knew how to deal adequately with his criticism (Stein, 6.I.1927).

3.1. Edith Stein's competence of the other/otherness

Stein's competence to enter into a relationship with others shows itself in a specific trait: her relationships are lasting; she is a faithful friend – even during her monastic life (Stein, 9.X.1933). The “constant attachment to all those whom life has brought together with me [...] makes up an essential part of my life,” she confesses, “quite independent of all current intercourse” (Stein, 13.IX.1925). The latter is especially evident during her religious life, which left little opportunity for writing or even for meeting people. Relationships ask for awareness and presence as one can only “accompany people with the heart”: Someone who knows what interests the other person or who knows the needs of others, is able to relate (Stein, 13.VII.1916 und 25.I.1920). Stein cultivates relationships very consciously and sustainably – despite a lack of time resources (Stein, 14.VI.1931).

Stein has the virtue of appreciating the otherness of others, even if it does not correspond to her own way of being (Stein, 12.II.1920). She also possesses the ability to approach others again and again, although the relationship was difficult. This can be seen in her relationship to Husserl: She is interested in knowing “how badly Husserl actually speaks to me” (Stein, 12.II.1920); she experienced him – like Kaufmann – as difficult in personal contact, but she nevertheless respects him as a “master whose image no human weakness can cloud for me” (Stein, 22.XI.1919). Despite of this sharp judgment, Stein remains aware of her own difficulties in social intercourse, e.g., when her multiple occupations cause her to miss the effect of her speech on her counterpart (Stein, 25.I.1920):

3.2. Stein forming competence of the other/otherness

Edith Stein was not only a good friend herself, but also brought other people together, such as Gertrud von le Fort and her own mother. She did this with great sensitivity and respect for the individuality of each person (Stein, 17.X.1933). This requires empathy as well as the ability to relate (Stein, 23.VII.1918). In this way, someone can grow into spiritual fatherhood and motherhood (Stein, 24.III.1936). Stein can also empathize with mothers and their children: She guides a mother to respect that her child feels how she feels

(Stein, 1.VIII.1938). It testifies of Stein respecting the otherness of the other when she asks for the presence of male teachers at a girls' school (Stein, 20.X.1932). Even if otherness sometimes becomes a painful challenge, Stein sees this as an opportunity for maturation (Stein, 29.IV.1937).

Stein calls her counterpart to self-reflection, but also asks people to correct a possibly wrong impression. Criticism of others can be justified – but it must not be expressed harshly and heartlessly. Stein sometimes observed this harshness in Husserl, but also reproaches herself for it. We must always respect the realm of the other – as others must respect ours. Therefore, it is an important aspect of social competence to keep a healthy distance to the opinion of others (Stein, 25.I.1920).

A strained relationship makes it necessary to be even more “careful” with each other (Stein, 2.II.1920). We need the courage to ask for understanding, even if there is only a misunderstanding bothering the relationship and no real guilt (Stein, 23.XII. 1941). This may clarify the conflict what allows to re-establish a good relationship (Stein, 25.I.1920). Sometimes jealousy and envy play into relationships. Stein admits that affection is often unequally distributed. In this regard, a simple clarifying dialogue is healing as well as a sound distance from the grievances which makes even humour possible: An example: Stein signs a letter in which she defends herself against the “patronizing” with “Your old “patroness” Edith Stein”. Incurable person!” (25.I.1920) Friends can help clarify, offer comfort and show a deep human understanding. This is how Stein helps Kaufmann in his depressions (Stein, 25.I.1920):

3.3. Competence of the other/otherness and resilience

Stein feels supported by her friends and wants to stay in touch with them (Stein, 9.III.1918). She is aware that friendship is a relationship of equal to equal; only under this condition, it can be powerful for both sides. For this reason, she does not want to be treated differently after joining Carmel (Stein, 12.VIII.1937). Resilience grows out of this genuine human relationship with one another, based on deep empathy. Respecting the other in his otherness protects against envy and jealousy. Those who can use the inevitable social friction as an opportunity to mature are protected from disappointment.

In principle, Stein offers three steps for dealing with criticism: (1) to reconsider the criticism beyond judgment (2) to be self-critical, and (3) to maintain a healthy distance from the opinions of others. Resilience thus also means activating the internally regulated defences and gaining the necessary distance. After a conflict has been resolved, the distance decreases again. The self-reflective person integrates the otherness of the other into one's own world view and accepts the differences in the relationships. This is exactly what constitutes the *competence* of otherness.

In forgiveness, self-competence and the competence of otherness meet: the one asking for forgiveness becomes aware of how his/her behaviour must have affected the other or how he/she has actually harmed the other. The other person's perspective thus sheds new light on one's own behaviour. When people become friends, a similar combination of self-competence and the competence of otherness is necessary: friends know what they mean to each other and how they can enrich each other. Genuine friendship is therefore the best guarantee for resilience in conflict situations or in dealing with criticism. Good friends are those who can express criticism without causing conflict. This is the strongest source of resilience.

4. TOWARDS A COMPETENCE OF FACTS

In Edith Stein's case, professional competence is combined with fact competence: she not only gives professional advice, but is also personally close to people as a loyal confidante (Stein, 17.IV.1931). Moreover, Stein is aware that some topics (as sex education) require a good knowledge of the people to whom one is trying to communicate them (Stein, 18.X.1932).

4.1. Edith Stein's competence of facts

Stein's scientific competence is beyond question, even for her famous teacher, Edmund Husserl, who testifies on it (Stein, 6.II.1919). The relationship with Max Scheler was more difficult, as Scheler accused Stein of plagiarism. Stein,

on the other hand – while acknowledging Scheler's merits – clearly spoke of a “concordance in results”, which is by no means the same thing (Stein, 4.4.1918).

Stein is able to assess her career prospects very clearly⁶ and also remains self-critical with regard to her professional achievements or her contribution in practical matters of life (Stein, 13.XI.1932). The latter is probably somewhat unjustified, as she had proved herself in the Red Cross service and was also helpful in caring for Husserl or in the monastery (Stein, 14.XI.1937 and 16.XI.1937). She also has a clear view of other practical matters such as money worries – and is grateful for any help in this regard (Stein, 26.I.1931). After her time in Speyer, she may have seemed somewhat alienated to the world (Stein, 11.X.1932), but she had not lost her view of world events. Although she initially viewed them with “ghastly optimism” (Stein, 13.VII.1916), she knew that she would have to pay tribute to them. Stein was well informed about the persecution of her family members, their plans to emigrate, their loss of jobs (Stein, 19.X.1937, 21.VII.1938, 23.VII.1938, and 1.VIII.1938), their separation from her children and the possible danger to their lives (Stein, 1.VIII.1938 and 12.VIII.1938). Several times she expresses concerns about her family and former colleagues (Stein, 20.X.1938, 27.X.1938, 9.XII.1938, and 6.XI.1940).

4.2. Stein forming competence of facts

Stein also guides others towards fact competence, first of all through clear professional advice (Stein, 9.III.1918), of course, but also by pointing out difficult circumstances that hinder development on a factual level (as in the collaboration with Husserl; Stein, 12.I.1917).

Stein repeatedly encourages young women to pursue a sound education, not to run away from conditions or demands (Stein, 12.X.1927, 6.I.1931, and 15.I.1931), and at the same time to respect their own limits: For we are “not

⁶ See Stein, 31.V.1920: “The circular letter to the universities on female habilitation is based on my request, but I expect practically nothing from it. It was just a nose-dive for the Göttingen gentlemen.”

pure spirits [...]. There is no point in rebelling against this fact” (Stein, 13. XI.1930). Stein’s practical advice bears witness to the sobriety that constitutes the fact competence (Stein, 25.XI.1936).

4.3. Competence of facts and resilience

Those who are competent in the matter foresee difficulties and have solutions at the ready. This includes professional competence as well as the ability to deal with the limiting aspects of one’s own nature and of the matter at hand. Adversities as well as challenges have to be tackled appropriately. In order to make progress, one has to face up to them. Therefore, professional competence includes goal orientation, self-commitment to the cause and perseverance as well as sober realism in assessing whether and how the cause can be achieved. Those who take this into account are able to cope with most challenges and know how to deal with limitations without becoming incapable of action.

5. TOWARDS A COMPETENCE OF MEANING

The what does not yet clarify the why or the wherefore. Motivation is decisive for whether the person capable of action will finally act. Motivation arises above all from the goal, from the meaning. Stein’s competence in meaning can easily be ascertained from her religious writings; in the following, however, only the letters will be consulted.

5.1. Edith Stein’s competence of meaning

Stein’s early striving for meaning is evident without her being able to name a religious background. She recognises meaning even in a possible suicide. Despite this, she draws on a deep hope for meaning, which she also wishes for others (Stein, 6.VII.1918). Everyday meaning shows itself in the value to be realised. Even if values cannot be determined objectively, the strength of feelings

that correspond to them testify to their existence (Stein, 16.IX.1919). However, some objective hierarchy of values can be stated: The personal value is higher than the material value: This is reflected in Stein's ability to remember facts concerning persons better than mere information on facts (Stein, 5.IV.1933).

Superficially, religion has a certain "function" in finding meaning in everyday life: everything can always be connected to God; everything is supported by his grace, because "heaven takes nothing from you without rewarding you immeasurably" (Stein, 12.X.1927 and 12.II.1928). The relationship with God also entitles one to trust in the distant future: it is enough for the believer to know the meaning for a day or two, for the meaning reveals itself anew every day (Stein, 10.IX.1929). The whole meaning lies with God; it is a goal that Stein is willing to present to people again and again (Stein, 17.III.1933).

5.2. Stein forming competence of meaning

Stein guides people concretely towards competence in meaning: Meaning can be found in everyday life, beyond endless (philosophical) reasoning that tends to obscure meaning (Stein, 6.VII.1918). This presupposes a discernment of the mind: to renounce evil and to be able to enjoy the good (Stein, 6.VII.1918 and 23.VII.1918).

The meaning sometimes reveals itself in the unexpected turn or in the future development, which shows that the current misfortune ultimately leads to the good (Stein, 23.07.1918). One can overcome a misfortune inwardly – as Stein did with her failed attempts at habilitation (a post-phd qualification not granted to women or later to Jewish persons at Stein's time; Stein, 22.XI.1919). From her own experience, she advises those affected: "Don't lose heart, even if everything goes wrong on the outside!" (Stein, 9.VI.1931) In addition, good friends can offer help and advice and help to find meaning again (Stein, 3.X.1919).

The religious dimension completes what remains open between people. In the face of a painful loss through death, Stein writes: "Nothing helps us to see our home up there as much as when someone goes ahead of us to whom we are attached with all our heart" (Stein, 16.XII.1923). Even the small losses in everyday life can be better borne if we become a child again and let go of

everything towards God (Stein, 6.I.1927). The “true child’s sense” (Stein, 19.XII.1930) leads us to place everything in God’s hands (Stein, without date 1930); it frees us from all fetters (Stein, end July/August 1930), including the fetters of prejudice (Stein, without date 1930).

The path to God can be characterised by loneliness – but even this feeling finds its meaning in God (Stein, without date 1930). For it is precisely in solitude that humans meet God “eye to eye” (Stein, 20.VIII.1931), which is the basic condition of every vocation. In view of this, spiritual guidance can only take place as open advice; ready-made schemes do not help (Stein, without date 1930). For God’s way with this person is always individual and unique – a way to oneself (Stein, 17.VIII.1931).

5.3. Competence of meaning and resilience

The highest resilience lies in the experience of meaning. However, Stein does not formulate this in philosophical-abstract terms, but in theological terms. For in the face of the inevitable, the unbearable, such as the death of a child, philosophical hope is no longer sufficient; here Stein refers to the hope of resurrection (Stein, 22.XII.1928). But the eschatological perspective is by no means a cheap consolation. Life and suffering need to be shaped if one wants to live meaningfully. She quotes: “*Hic Rhosos, hic salta!*” It is necessary to now and here participate in the redemptive work of Christ (Stein, 26.12.1932). Desperate prayer and sacrifice may characterise the present, but they do not have the last word; for the believer, there remains the comforting perspective of eternity (Stein, 16.II.1930).

6. THE MEANINGFUL CONNECTION OF THE COMPETENCES

6.1. The interdependence of the individual competences

In order to make sense of life, even of the adversities in life, the perspective of meaning is needed in all individual competences. Stein can even

find the connection to meaning competence in the fact competence. She sees it also in the orientation towards others and in the understanding for them. Self-competence must also flow into meaning-competence; then we become able to face life adequately. This is ultimately the ability of the resilient person.

a) Meaning and competence of facts

Stein honestly admits that at the beginning of her spiritual life she thought she could or even should neglect the practical side of life. She realised only gradually that God can be found in the simplest task and that every activity requires His work of grace (Stein, 12.II.1928 and 23.VI.1935). In the divine light, even obstacles become a blessing: Stein's way into the monastery was paved by prevented habilitation and scientific work (Stein, 20.XI.1933). Religious people, too, must be credible as persons; otherwise, what they teach will not be accepted (Stein, 20.X.1932). Not only prayer, but also practical help is required, and faith as such is not understandable without any factual knowledge (Stein, 7.V.1933 and 28.VIII.1932).

b) Competence of other/ness and competence of meaning

If the meaning of what is happening is not visible, especially in the life of another, one can very well share the other person's cross or together bear the "harshness and incomprehensibility" (Stein, 12.X.1927 and 31.X.1933) of what is happening. This is true even if one imposes the cross on the other – as Stein had to impose suffering on her mother when she chose the path to the convent. In this, the decision of conscience is decisive, even if it is an imposition for the other person (Stein, 20.III.1934). Stein was convinced that those who give their lives completely to God are not lost for others, but are given anew in prayer and in spiritual closeness (Stein, 14.V.1934 and 13.IX.1936). The peace that one gains in God radiates back to others; one can meet each other in him (Stein, 31.I.1935 and 23.V.1931). In this way, the often fragile human connection is supported by God and becomes sustainable through all catastrophes.

c) Self-competence and spiritual competence

The starting point of these relationships is again the person who, called by God, mediates peace, but only to the extent that he or she grows into this calling (Stein, 31.X.1933 and 18.X.1933). This can be a path through humiliations (Stein, 4.VII.1931). Above all, it is a path that demands to penetrate the depths of one's own soul in order to become more and more aware of one's own shadow sides, as well as of one's own motivation (Stein, 7.IX.1937); one should know about one's own character, which one may and should develop in God.

6.2. *The accumulation of all competences in the meaning*

Resilience grows out of the fact that fact-competence, self-competence, the competence of otherness and meaning-competence ultimately intertwine. Whoever learns to read adversity as an opportunity (Stein, 15.X.1937) and to accept the cross, which may be "thoroughly felt" (Letter to Stein, 19.XI.1941) as Ruth Kantorowitz says, finds meaning. Because, like Jesus' cross, one's own cross is the path to salvation.⁷ Whoever can take everything into prayer in order to present it to God, will understand that even one's prayer is grace. The main and lasting attitude will be gratitude, as Stein could testify of herself (Stein, 17.X.1934).

Stein knows that life has more than one dimension, that heaven is a reality in which one's own life is suspended and from which care is given to us in the present. "This is such a great comfort" (Stein, 31.X.1938), she states. If we see this dimension, we will be able to bear all that is now unbearable; in this perspective, all that is incomprehensible becomes comprehensible (Stein, 10.X.1936). This essential openness of the human being is called hope; it is the strongest force and never-ending source of meaning.

⁷ See Stein, 9.XII.1938: "By the cross I understood the destiny of God's people, which was already beginning to be announced at that time. I thought that those who understood that it was the cross of Christ had to take it upon themselves in the name of all. Of course, today I know more about what it means to be married to the Lord in the sign of the cross. But it will never be understood, because it is a mystery."

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