

Empathy and the Problem of War and Terrorism

War and political violence in the Mideast is once again rising to a level at which the major media platforms in the United States are giving it some attention. That's to distinguish the lower, but constant, level of violence by the U.S. military and Central Intelligence Agency which has continued unabated since the attack by al Qaeda on September 11, 2001. Two peaks of violence since 2001 were the "total war" of the Iraq War of 2003 and the NATO air war against Libya of 2011, led by the U.S. Air Force. Along with those two peaks of violence, there has been what the Department of Defense has come to call the Perpetual War. With the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and increased military operations by both the U.S. and Israel in Syria, the move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, celebrated against the backdrop of what is being called massacres by the IDF in Gaza; tensions are increasing in the Mideast, following the same pattern with Iran as was followed by the U.S. for its 2003 Iraq War, suggesting another "peak" in violence is imminent.

Consequently, with the inadequate analyses and explanations of how wars and terrorism originate, in this writer's opinion, it seems timely to bring the type of "thinking" which Edmund Husserl applied in the Crisis of the European Science and his one-time student Hannah Arendt advocated to understand violence to the present situation. But more specifically, that of another student of Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein and her work, *On the Problem of Empathy*, which this paper will most rely upon.

Apart from the immediate crisis of possible war with Iran, the importance of "perceptions" in war, and therefore, of phenomenological understanding of perceptions, and what they mean and how they can be manipulated can be seen in the following examples.

That the United States has embarked upon a “perpetual offensive war” would have to be shown in historical documents going back to the immediate end of the Cold War, for which space does not allow here. But that it is construed as a perpetual war can be seen in a variety of statements by U.S. military leaders over the past few years. Lt. General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.) co-wrote an article entitled, *The Price of Perpetual War* in 2016. He wrote: “The United States has entered an era of perpetual war. The U.S. military has been at war for 15 straight years with no end in sight . . . Today’s wars can be characterized more as conflicts in the ‘gray zone,’ ambiguous battles with less-defined shapes and even less-clear outcomes.”¹ Barno linked to another article of his on what the so-called “gray zone” meant, where he wrote: “Gray zone conflicts are here to stay. The United States must increase its abilities to *understand*, adapt, and prevail in these conflicts so that they do not grow to a level of strategic disruption that threatens vital U.S. interests.”² (*Emphasis added.*)

In 2014, Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, as the outgoing head of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, told a group of young Army Officers that extremist groups were “expanding their cause to southeast Asia and other regions of the world.” But Flynn told them that a response to that could not just be “becoming more adaptive killers.” Instead, Flynn said, “there are sufficient numbers of believers in their ideas,” he said. “We have to look at the manifestos of why they are doing what they are doing. . . . Can we go in and do the kinds of things we know we need to do to take away the will of our enemy . . . This is about removing confidence and removing the will power of an enemy to do what they think they need to do, and I think that is part of the conversation we need to have.”³

¹ <https://warontherocks.com/2016/05/the-price-of-perpetual-war/>

² <https://warontherocks.com/2015/05/fighting-and-winning-in-the-gray-zone/>

³ <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/09/11/armys-combat-leaders-prepare-for-new-war.html>

Clarifying that belief held by Flynn and Barno, the Commander of the newly created Marine Corps Information Operations Center (Psychological Operations in the Army) Col. William McClane, stated that Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller, “speaks a lot about adversary . . . perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and how that's important," McClane went on, the “understanding of the cognitive dimension, how to affect and change behaviors and adversary target audience decision-making where you may not even have to fire a shot -- you may be able to influence your adversary and reach that end state without doing that.”⁴

Demonstrating the high priority that “perception management” has in today’s military, and how advanced it is in U.S. and Israeli strategic theory can be seen in a lawsuit brought by an Israeli attorney against the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs. The attorney, Ben Meir, alleges the Ministry is “surveilling citizens and conducting illegal operations intended to influence and manipulate public opinion.”

Specifically, a series of articles drawing on freedom of information requests, “revealed that one of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs’ main activities is the [funding and publication of government propaganda](#) on social networks and in newspapers . . . operating in Israel and abroad.” The method of this is seen in a payment by the Israeli government to a private organization “to carry out ‘mass consciousness activities’ within the framework of what the Ministry of Strategic Affairs calls ‘extra-governmental discourse.’”⁵ The purpose of these “mass consciousness activities” is alleged to be to motivate or enlist Israelis into the struggle.⁶

How deeply embedded in politics and war “as the continuation of politics” are “mass consciousness activities,” was seen in the 2016 U.S. election. But not as the perception which

⁴ <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/05/14/marines-get-new-psychological-operations-mos-community-grows.html>

⁵ <https://972mag.com/new-petition-challenging-israels-secret-information-warfare-campaign/135037/>

⁶ <https://972mag.com/the-israeli-government-is-paying-for-anti-bds-journalism/131718/>

was created that the Russians were “attacking our democracy” through Cambridge Analytica. As it turns out, with investigation by The Guardian newspaper, the mass consciousness operation upon the U.S. was conducted through Cambridge Analytica, but at the direction and supervision of their parent company, SCL. SCL, according to The Guardian, “had access to secret UK information and was singled out for praise by the UK Ministry of Defence for the training it provided to a psychological operations warfare group, according to documents released by MPs.”

Documents released in a parliamentary hearing revealed that in addition to SCL specialization in psychological operations war, which is about “perception manipulation” in U.S. military terms, and also included a “brochure promising to create US election campaign tools in 2014 that was ‘prepared for SCL election by AggregateIQ Data Services’ at a cost of more than \$500,000 using ‘modeling data’ from SCL to target 100 million or more Americans.”⁷ In fact, other Guardian articles on SCL revealed they have a long history going back to their roots in South African politics during the Apartheid era of interfering in foreign elections on behalf of extreme right-wing parties and candidates. Most recently, other than with Trump, those activities were in Kenya and India. But contrary to the accepted “perception” that the Russians were involved, SCL corporation is in many ways a “Who’s who,” of upper class British citizens. This is not to suggest the Russians were not independently working to influence the election, but the funding and effort they put in to it was minuscule compared to SCL, which was in fact “anti-Russian” with their preferred candidate having been Ted Cruz who called for more aggression against Russia.

This paper is not about SCL or the 2016 election, however, nor is it about the use of phenomenological psychology to “manage perceptions” of a target audience to, in the words of a

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/29/cambridge-analytica-predecessor-had-access-to-secret-mod-information>

1990's Rand Corporation conference on U.S. Information War, "condition the battlefield" of public opinion both domestically in the U.S., which would be to "motivate or enlist" Americans into the struggle, and to foreign audiences to present a U.S. war as "legitimate" to keep world opinion from opposing a war as much as possible.

This all goes to the heart of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological theory, I believe, as well as that of his student, Edith Stein, and her study of Empathy. It also goes to two of his philosophical predecessors, I would argue, David Hume and Carl von Clausewitz, which I hope to show. This is not to address the phenomenon of war and violence in themselves, as scholars have done. Rather, it is to address the phenomenon of "causality" of war and at the root of that, is "empathy" and a collective consciousness or intersubjectivity.

There are phenomenological scholars who have written on violence and war who have expressed the opinion that phenomenology doesn't have much to say on war, but I must disagree. I believe it is precisely the science best suited to address the social psychology of communities in which some members come to act violently. Husserl's method of the "phenomenological reduction" and his teleological-historical understanding of history is directly applicable to understand the essence of what motivates violent behavior in a political context and is essential to understanding war or political violence. I use the term expression "political violence" rather than the common term used today, terrorism, because "terrorism" and "terrorists" are terms with a loaded meaning for which the phenomenological reduction must first break down to understand the essence of the acts. In the "spectrum of conflict," and in classical guerilla war theory, terrorism is merely a tactic in the early stage of rebellion or revolution, with the intent of inspiring an insurgency against the ruling power. For the purposes of this paper, "terrorism" will be used to describe this tactical phenomenon, however, to keep it simple.

In general, there are three explanations of motive offered in response to any “terrorist attack.” The one which was made “popular” by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is that it is driven by “radical Islamic extremism,” in their “war” against Western ideas. It’s become a mandatory explanation for Republicans in the U.S. as was seen in the 2016 primary campaign where Republican candidate vied with each other to say it more frequently. The second explanation offered is an orthodox sociological explanation such as the perpetrator came from a background of poverty, or from a background of too much wealth, or being disoriented socially when coming to the so-called West. The third routine explanation is that always offered by the FBI, which is “we don’t know, but investigation continues,” and then any forthcoming explanation being forgotten about until the next time when the same “explanation” is offered.⁸

War is Never an Isolated Act

This writer holds to the position that was once held by the U.S. Army, which is that “sporadic attacks” do not in themselves constitute war, even those claimed to have been carried out by al Qaeda. But solely for the purpose of analysis, those violent acts claimed by al Qaeda as their own will be considered “war.” That is to apply the insight of Carl von Clausewitz, who understood in *On War* that “war is never an isolated act.”

Nor, as he wrote, does it ever break out wholly unexpectedly or can it be spread instantaneously. Furthermore, Clausewitz recognized that war is an instrument of politics and that recognition enabled the problem to be analyzed as the “thing in itself, so to speak, in his eyes. Consequently, he observed: “this way of looking at it will show us how wars must vary

⁸ In fact, that’s a deliberate lie, as The Intercept reported: “A Secret FBI Study found that anger over U.S. military operations abroad was the most commonly cited motivation for individuals involved in cases of “homegrown” terrorism. The report also identified no coherent pattern to “radicalization,” concluding that it remained near impossible to predict future violent acts.”

<https://theintercept.com/2016/10/11/us-military-operations-are-biggest-motivation-for-homegrown-terrorists-fbi-study-finds/>

with the nature of their motives and of the situation which give rise to them.” Therefore, it followed that:

The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.

So, in accepting that war, or its manifestation as terrorism, is never an isolated act, it follows then that to understand war and terrorism in their essence, Husserl’s phenomenological reduction method and teleological-historical understanding is the only means to fully understand war and political resistance, legitimate, or not. But to look at each as a “whole,” fails to “bracket” them sufficiently to find their essence. For doing so, Edith Stein’s *On the Problem of Empathy* will primarily be followed here for its insight of intersubjectivity and shared consciousness.

As an example of that, in my opinion, and how violence itself serves as “propaganda of the deed” in inciting anger and hate within a community when it is a collective “experience” shared by all or most of the members of a small community or a nation, is what occurred in the United States after Pearl Harbor and after September 11, 2001. A similar example, though on a smaller scale, was seen following the attacks upon five U.S. military servicemembers in Chattanooga in July, 2015.⁹ By the tone of statements quoted in a Washington Post article of July 19th and the intensity of the anger and hate expressed, as well as zeal for violent revenge, it is as if many in the local population who went to the site of the shootings in anger were “self-radicalized” by collectively experiencing the trauma as it happened within the community.

⁹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/angry-protesters-in-chattanooga-whens-the-government-going-to-do-something/2015/07/19/ef1004b0-2e45-11e5-8353-1215475949f4_story.html?utm_term=.ac7a0ab91f93

As the Post describes, the bullet-riddled Armed Forces Recruiting Center “was surrounded by screaming street preachers, angry protesters and unsettled mourners who had just arrived from Sunday church. . . .” People were screaming. One woman yelled: “I can’t believe these people even come here to this country! . . . Why do they come here?” A man answered, “Because they want to kill us.” Many of the “agitated crowd” were carrying holstered pistols, and “wanted to know why the Obama administration and the military weren’t doing more to kill Islamist extremists in Iraq, Syria or wherever they might be.” The crowd’s feelings would seem proof that Fox News president Roger Ailes’s was correct when he wrote to President Bush “that the American public would be patient with the war on terror ‘as long as they were convinced that Bush was using the harshest measures possible.’” This crowd didn’t seem patient, but they certainly desired the harshest measures possible in retaliation for the shootings.

Even a local Hamilton County public defender wanted to toss aside the Constitution he is sworn to defend. He allegedly wrote on Facebook; “I think the best we can do is ascertain who our enemies are, whether foreign or domestic, and then kill them. . . . This same thing will happen again, likely soon, unless our government can do a better job of identifying our enemies.” His call was for extrajudicial killings in other words; just as totalitarian governments are known for.

When an attorney serving as a public defender calls for the extrajudicial killing of “enemies” within the United States, they must be seen as “radicalized,” as that is counter to what this nation is supposed to stand for, as is torture, even though the CIA chief torturer was just confirmed as director of that agency. Evidence of how a “shared consciousness” had come into being with these events, the event of the shooting but also of the angry gathering, might be seen in the feeling expressed by an Air Force wife to the mother of one of the victim’s, who whispered to

her; “We’re all behind you. You’re part of our military family, and we love you.” That raises the question of how a community on the other side of the world feels in the aftermath of a drone attack which kills a large number of innocent people, either by mistake, or as collateral damage?

Associative Sympathy

Scottish philosopher David Hume explained how individuals would feel so intensely about victims that they would respond with hatred to their killing, as happened in Chattanooga. In “A Treatise of Human Nature,” as explained by Hume scholar Prof. Charlotte R. Brown, Hume explains why we care about the pain and suffering of others. When we encounter others in distress whom we associate with ourselves in some manner, he observed, we feel concern for their plight. But why do their sorrows and afflictions matter to us? Hume explained our compassionate responses to those in distress in terms of the principles of “sympathy.” Hume’s use of the word “sympathy,” is in how “empathy” is used today.

Hume’s idea was that the “moral sentiments,” in the terminology of the 18th Century, spring from sympathy. But to Hume, sympathy was a mechanism of the mind. It is the capacity of the human mind “to receive the passions, sentiments, and even beliefs of others.” Prof. Brown explains that sympathy is not itself a passion so it shouldn’t be confused with feelings such as compassion, pity, or empathy. Instead, it is a mechanism by which the feelings of others are imparted to us. Sympathy is the explanation for how we “literally enter into the feelings of others, feeling what they are feeling.”

Hume explains, however, that sympathy works in terms of the more fundamental principle of the mind, the associative principle. This is that certain ideas go together, “resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and causation.” We sympathize more strongly and easily with those with whom

we are related by causation and “who are spatially or temporarily contiguous to us - friends, family, neighbors, and fellow citizens.

When one is related to someone in all three ways, they are able to conceive of that person’s passion “in the strongest and most lively manner.” Sympathy enables humans to enter into the feelings of anyone to a degree, “our capacity to react sympathetically to others varies with the variations in the associative relations.”

Furthermore, sympathy allows humans to have sentiments even to strangers. For example, when we see a bully beating up a vulnerable victim, even though both are strangers, we respond sympathetically to the victim’s pain. Causal reasoning focuses our attention on the bully, since he is the cause of the victim’s pain, whom we sympathize with, and we may end up hating the bully. Finally, associational sympathy isn’t predictive in how people *will* react. Prof. Brown notes that sympathy isn’t a motive. It may enter into an explanation of why someone performs a certain action, but it doesn’t explain how they will react to painful feelings, with everyone regulating sympathy differently. In the example above, one person may be moved to help the victim, and another to just walk away.

Edith Stein on Empathy

Edith Stein addressed the issue of Hume’s “sympathy,” but as it would be called today, as “empathy.” Her phenomenological study is particularly valuable in understanding terrorism and war and the causality of each, which are in fact, generally identical as each are the use of violence toward a political objective. Stein wrote in her forward to *On the Problem of Empathy* that she recognized the different forms of empathy as being “mingled together” so that they were indistinguishable from each other. Therefore, in seeking the “epistemological, purely descriptive, and genetic-psychological aspects of this identified problem,” was that the forms of empathy

which she had listed were indistinguishable from each other. Consequently, it seemed to her, that she “should extract the basic problem so that all the others would become intelligible from its viewpoint.” She recognized this “basic problem to be the question of empathy as the perceiving of foreign objects and their experience.” She noted that she had had a look at Professor Husserl’s Part II of his “Ideen,” dealing in part with the same question so refrained from using new suggestions she had received. Part II will be briefly addressed in this paper.¹⁰ Addressing only what I consider the most relevant of Stein’s study to the theme of this paper, causation and motivation of war by reason of empathy and collective consciousness, I won’t delve into every aspect of her book.

In the course of *On the Problem of Empathy*, Stein explains as well tenets of Husserl’s phenomenology, at least as it existed at the time of her writing this book. She begins with explaining the phenomenological reduction itself as her “Method of the Investigation.” She wrote that the goal of phenomenology was to “clarify and thereby to find the ultimate basis of all knowledge.” That was to be done by considering nothing that is in anyway “doubtful.” That is, to consider nothing that can be eliminated. This is not to be based on any “results of science whatsoever, nor is it to be based on “natural experience” as each of these are subject to diverse interpretations. Therefore, she wrote, “the entire surrounding world, the physical as well as the psycho-physical, the bodies as well as the souls of men and animals (including the psycho-physical person of the investigator himself) is subject to the exclusion or reduction.”¹¹

This is what Husserl called “bracketing,” or “epoche.” He described this in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* by writing: “The universal epoche of the world as it becomes known in

¹⁰ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), pp. 1-2.

¹¹ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 3.

consciousness (the "putting it in brackets") shuts out from the phenomenological field the world as it exists for the subject in simple absoluteness; its place, however, is taken by the world as given in *consciousness* (perceived, remembered, judged, thought, valued, etc.) -the world as such, the "world in brackets," or in other words, the world, or rather individual things in the world as absolute, are replaced by the respective meaning of each in *consciousness* *Bewusstseinsinn*] in its various modes (perceptual meaning, recollected meaning, and so on)."¹²

This "bracketing," explains Stein, leaves the whole "phenomenon of the world" when its positing has been suspended, and these "phenomena" are the object of phenomenology. It is not sufficient to comprehend and explain them individually. Rather, Stein wrote, "we must press forward to their essence. Each phenomenon forms an exemplary basis for the consideration of essence." This leads to the "phenomenology of perception," which "wants to ascertain what "perception is essentially as such." Furthermore, it still remains to show that one's experience is not to be excluded, which is to say, that "'I,' the experiencing subject who considers the world and my own person as phenomenon, 'I' am in experience and only in it, am just as indubitable to cancel as experience itself."¹³

Applying this, the "world in which we live is not only a world of physical bodies but also of experiencing subjects external to us, of whose experiences we know." Even though we are "subject to such diverse deceptions that occasionally we are inclined to doubt the possibility of knowledge in this domain at all," the "phenomenon of foreign psychic life is indubitably there, and we now want to examine this a little further."¹⁴ Stein then elaborated that while we could

¹² Edmund Husserl, "Phenomenology," Edmund Husserl's Article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1927), Revised Translation by Richard E. Palmer.

¹³ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 4.

¹⁴ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 5.

proceed from the complete phenomenon in our experiential world, “the phenomenon of a psycho-physical individual which is clearly distinguished from a physical thing. . . . This individual is not given as a physical body, but as a sensitive, living body belonging to an “I.” an “I” that senses, thinks, feels, and wills.” The living body of this other “I,” “not only fits into my phenomenological world,” Stein wrote, “but is itself the center of orientation of such a phenomenological world. It faces this world and communicates with me.”¹⁵

Instead of stopping there with her investigation, however, and accepting only that what “appears to us beyond the mere physical body given in outer perception is constituted within consciousness,” Stein proposes that “a still more radical examination is possible.” She observes that all the data “of foreign experience point back to the basic nature of acts in which foreign experience is comprehended.” She designates these acts ‘as empathy, regardless of all historical tradition attached to the word.’”

Stein begins to describe empathy in comparison with other acts by suggesting we can see emphatic acts “best in their individuality if we confront them with other acts of pure consciousness (our field of consideration after making the prescribed reduction).” To illustrate this, she uses the example of a friend telling her that he has lost his brother, and she becomes aware of his pain. But the outward sign of his pain is not her concern; she “would like to know, not how I arrive at this awareness, but what it itself is.” She notes that she has no outer perception of the pain, and in fact, the pain is not a thing nor is it given to her as a “thing.”¹⁶ Since she can never get an “orientation,” where the pain is primordially given, she states, therefore, that “empathy does not have the character of outer perception, though it has something

¹⁵ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 5.

¹⁶ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 6.

in common with outer perception. That is because, in both cases, empathy and outer perception, “the object itself is present here and now.” She means by this that outer perception is recognized as an act given primordially, so even though empathy is not outer perception, “this is not to say that it does not have this ‘primordially.’”¹⁷

Stein explains that there are things other than the outer world that are given to us primordially. Ideation, for instance, “which is the intuitive comprehension of essential states,” is given to us primordially. It is trivial to say that empathy, Stein went on, is not ideation since it deals with “grasping what is here and now.” And ideation is the attainment of an “essential knowledge of experiences, given to us primordially, as stated above. In addition, our own experiences “as they are given in reflection have the character of primordially.” So there is then the question of “whether empathy has the primordially of our own experience.” To answer that, according to Stein, the meaning of primordially had to be further differentiated. That is, that “all our own *present* experiences are primordially.” (*Emphasis added.*) But, Stein goes on:

not all our experiences are primordially given nor primordially in their content. Memory, expectation, and fantasy do not have their object bodily present before them. They only represent it, and this character of representation is an immanent, moment of these acts, not a sign from their objects.¹⁸

Stein concludes from this that it is possible for every experience to be primordially given, that is, “it is possible for the reflecting glance of the “I” in the experience to be there bodily itself.” But it is possible as well “for our own experiences to be given non-primordially in memory, expectation, or fantasy.”¹⁹ Empathy itself has this same dual nature; “we are dealing with an act which is primordial as present experience though non-primordial in content.”²⁰ This

¹⁷ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 7.

¹⁸ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 7.

¹⁹ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 8.

²⁰ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 10.

content is an experience which can be had in different ways such as in memory or expectation, or even fantasy. When it arises before us all at once, it faces such as an object, such as in the sadness we “read in another’s face.” When we inquire into its implied tendencies, trying “to bring another’s mood to clear givenness” to oneself, “the content, having pulled me into it, is no longer really an object.” We are “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.” At the risk of leaving a crucial element out here in Stein’s analysis, the conclusion she states, is: The subject of the empathized experience, however, is not the subject empathizing, but another.” This is what is new in contrast with the memory, expectation, or the fantasy of our own experiences. “These two subjects are separate and not joined together, as previously, by a consciousness of sameness or a continuity of experience.”²¹ Consequently, while we may be living in the other’s joy, we do not feel primordial joy in that as it “does not issue live from my ‘I.’” Nor does it “have the character of once having lived like remembered joy,” and much less is it merely fantasized without actual life. That is because this other subject is primordial even if we do not experience it as primordial. But in our non-primordial experience, however, we feel “led by a primordial one not experienced by oneself but still there, manifesting itself in our own non-primordial experience.

Thus, Stein said, “empathy is a kind of act of perceiving *sui generis*.” She explained further that she had set herself “the task of expounding it in its peculiarity before tackling any other question (of whether such experience is valid or how it occurs),” and this investigation was conducted in its purest generality. Her conclusion is that empathy is “the experience of foreign consciousness in general, irrespective of the kind of the experiencing subject or of the subject

²¹ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), pp. 10-11.

whose consciousness is experienced.”²² In doing so, only the pure “I,” the subject of experience, on the subject’s as well as on the object’s side, was discussed. This is to the point of her phenomenological reduction method and how all else was “bracketed.” With this, she could state that the “experience which an ‘I’ as such has of another ‘I’ as such looks like this. This is how human beings comprehend the psychic life of their fellows,” meaning as she writes, of their love and their anger.²³

Stein adds that this presentation of the nature of “empathy on the whole,” does not accomplish much. Instead, we “must now investigate how empathy is differentiated as the perception of psycho-physical individuals and their experience of personality, etc.” From here, with the conclusions she’s reached, is the possibility “to criticize some historical theories of how foreign consciousness is experienced.” This criticism allows her to “complete our analysis along some lines.”²⁴ This begins to get to the crux of how empathy plays a role in warfare in the generation of “enmity.”

In a section on “Negative Empathy,” Stein explains how the “‘personality’ has transcendencies as well as a qualitatively developed present ‘I,’ which are themselves subject to exclusion and are only considered by us as phenomena.” She illustrates this by the hypothetical of:

I am completely filled by grief over a bereavement at the moment my friend tells me the joyful news. This grief does not permit the predominance of sympathy with the joy. There is a conflict (again, not real but phenomenal) involving two levels. The “I” living entirely in the grief perhaps at first experiences empathy as a “background experience.”²⁵

²² Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 11.

²³ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 11.

²⁴ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), pp. 11-12.

²⁵ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 15.

Stein explains this is similar to peripheral areas of vision that are seen and “yet are not intentional objects in the full sense, are not objects of actual attention.”²⁶ This results in the “I” feeling pulled toward two sides at once, “both experiences claiming to be a ‘cogito’ in a specific sense (i.e., acts in which the ‘I’ lives and turns toward its object).” Both sides seek to pull the “cogito” into themselves, an experience of being split. Consequently, on one level, “there is a split between our own actual experiences and the empathic experience.” Furthermore, it is possible for the “I” to be pulled into the empathic experience, “to turn to the other’s joyful object,” while at the same time, “the other pull may not cease so that an actual joy can prevail.”²⁷ Or, the actual bereavement can prevail. Or, maybe there’s not any joy claiming to be a cogito, but only more tragic experiences, as occurs in war, each claiming to be a “cogito?”

In any of these cases, there is a transition from one “cogito” to another in general. Further, Stein writes, “while I am living in one cogito, another can appear and pull me into it without causing conflict. Or, the tendencies implied but not entirely consummated can obstruct the transition to a new cogito. But “all this is just as possible in perception, memory, in theoretical contemplation, etc. as in empathy.”²⁸

Stein turns to the issue of empathy and oneness which goes to the point of this paper, in part. That is, in trying to understand the case of the human beings in Chattanooga previously mentioned and their response to a violent attack in their community, as well as foreign communities who come under attack by the United States. Space does not permit discussion of Clausewitz’s recognition that “retaliation” is a constant part of warfare, and serves as an explanation for the intensity of hatred and enmity increasing toward an “enemy.” But Stein ties

²⁶ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 15.

²⁷ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 15.

²⁸ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 16.

this together in a way with her discussion of the “foreign experience.” She explains that when the “I” is co-experiencing another, it is turned toward the object of the foreign experience, and “that it has the foreign present empathically at the same time, and that the sympathetic and empathic act do not have to coincide in content.”²⁹

To illustrate this, she uses the example of a newspaper report that “the fortress has fallen.” In her example, on hearing this, “all of us seized by an excitement, a joy a jubilation. We all have the ‘same feeling.’” She asks, “Have thus the barriers separating one ‘I’ been freed from another broken down here? Has the ‘I’ been freed from its monadic character?” Not entirely, she answers. She feels her joy while she empathically comprehends the others’ and see them as the same. And seeing this, “it seems that the non-primordial character of the foreign joy has vanished.” Indeed, she continues, “this phantom joy coincides in every respect with my real live joy, and theirs is just as live to them as mine is to me.” She then has, intuitively before her, what the others feel. “It comes to life in my feeling, and from the ‘I’ and “you” arises the ‘we’ as a subject of a higher level.”³⁰ Furthermore, Stein notes that it “is possible to be joyful over the same event, though not filled with exactly the same joy.” Even if joyfulness is more accessible to the others, “which difference I comprehend empathically. . . . I empathically arrive at the ‘sides’ of joyfulness obstructed in my own joy.”³¹

This in turn ignites her joy, “and only now is there complete coincidence with what is empathized.” This means, if “the same thing happens to the others, we empathically enrich our

²⁹ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 17.

³⁰ In endnote 28 to this statement, Stein refers to Scheler emphasizing “the phenomenon that different people can have strictly the same feeling and stresses that the various subjects are thereby retained.” However, Stein writes, that Scheler fails to consider that “the unified act does not have the plurality of the individuals for its subject, but a higher unity based on them.”

³¹ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), pp. 17-18.

feeling our feeling so that ‘we’ now feel a different joy from ‘I,’ ‘you,’ and ‘he’ in isolation. But ‘I,’ ‘you,’ and ‘he’ are retained in ‘we.’”³²

Consequently, a “we,” not an “I,” is the subject of the empathizing. Therefore, “Not through the feeling of oneness, but through empathizing, do we experience others. The feeling of oneness and the and the enrichment of our own experience become possible through empathy.”³³ Changing Stein’s hypothetical slightly, one can see how the “we” still comes about through empathy, with news that “the fortress has fallen,” but consider that the empathizing subjects are on the side of the defenders of the fortress, or of a community which has just suffered a violent attack with multiple victims killed. The “we” then presumably don’t have the same feelings of joy but of sorrow and, perhaps, even extreme anger, like they did in Chattanooga, as described above. Or consider that the “I” and the “you” are in Iraq, and having been invaded by the U.S. military, begin hearing reports of, and seeing, brutality by the U.S. toward the Iraqi people, with no genuine forum to have their grievances to be heard. Could it be that that too could create a “we” of aggrieved people, brought together by empathy, but one driven by anger?

One must stop here, though more elucidation of the collective consciousness which too is a product of empathy with the foreign experience of others, is necessary to be further developed to understand the passions unleashed by warfare. But to bring this to some kind of closure, but to get to the essence of the phenomenon of anger and hatred as motivating forces which have to be considered in war, whether “total war,” counter-insurgency, or counter-terrorism, a teleological-historical reflection is required, as Husserl advocated in *The Crisis of European Sciences*, to understand as Clausewitz did that policy must always be reconsidered, particularly when a war is

³² Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 18.

³³ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C. (1989), 18.

being lost or policy is failing by only serving to generate hatred and the creation of ever more “enemies,” with legitimate grievances. The alternative to that is a metaphorical “Stalingrad,” as in 1942, or Napoleon’s March on Moscow, neither of which ended well. If there is to be an alternative to our own Stalingrad, the U.S. must begin empathizing with others in the world, or face catastrophic failure which is looming.