

THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF EMPATHY
IN THE THOUGHT OF EDITH STEIN

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Faculty
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College of Arts and Sciences
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In Partial fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

by

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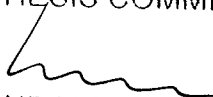
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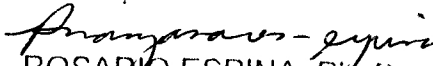
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This thesis entitled THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF EMPATHY IN THE THOUGHT OF EDITH STEIN prepared and submitted by SHELDON RAMOS TABILE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION

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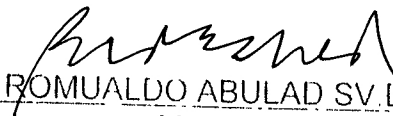
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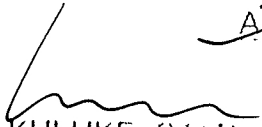
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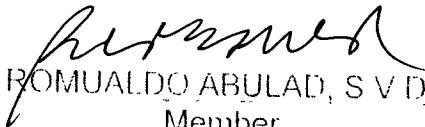
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

At the very outset, the foremost concern of this work is raised, "Who are we?" Countless responses can be given to this question, which may reflect the cultural background, status in life, academic training, or religious affiliations of the respondents. One may say that she/he is a Filipino or wealthy individual or a Ph. D. degree holder or a religious priest. "We" defines certain common characteristics of individuals that form a group. Variations of characters mean a plurality of groups. Numerous groups hold different perspectives, principles, and practices. Differences of groups create polarities in the world. Split structures of society emerge as a division between those who are included either in the dominating or subordinating spheres which are seemingly is set up in oppositional relations. Such adverse interactions break, wound, and inflict suffering on the relation that runs across women and men. These are concretely seen in the scenarios of political wars, ethnic conflicts, slandering speeches, perspective factions, in a word: violence.

Violence is a result of power struggle. It emerges from an equal relation that exists among equal women and men wherein some individuals struggle to break such state of equality through domination over others. It results to a party perceived as superior that mandates, deprives, oppresses, exploits, and marginalizes others. This is not overtly seen since it lies in the structure of

interaction between social individuals. A direct form of violence surfaces and is perceived when the underside group becomes aware and struggles against it. Violence is rooted in the assertion of the self over others.

Violence which seems also to escalate more and more nowadays is not only in forms of killings and armed offenses but also in situations of poverty deprivation of human rights, oppression of women, sex discrimination, economic exploitation, and marginalization of the people. These situations deny people full access to participation in economic, political, educational, cultural, and religious life.

In these situations of violence, it seems that the consoling response of humanity is to pray for peace, justice, unity, equality, and others. Such response is an antique reaction that eternally recurs up to the present times as a protest to these violent situations. It seems that these untiring repetitions of prayers are manifestations of a deep sense of faith; however it also equally means that until now, humanity has not realized their prayers. Does this mean that prayers are defective? One may throw doubt concerning prayers but certainly, when it comes to human roles, women and men are defective. The proof for this meets straight to the eyes or more accurately within women and men for it is paradoxical that they long for a harmonious condition and yet they perpetuate violence in the world.

More than turning the world into a battlefield between oppositions, the foremost question of this work directs the human awareness to the relatedness that runs across women and men. The question is more on the pursuit of

community rather than identity. It attempts to understand human existence and essence under the horizon of relation. It redirects the consciousness from the peripheral differences to that which runs across women and men, their link with one another, their awareness that they are sisters and brothers.

Although it is the situation of women and men, they seem to take for granted, overlook, and presuppose the relation. The need surfaces to rediscover and re-encounter other individuals in this condition of connectedness. The study intends to recover the eroding human relations among women and men. But how is this done?

The philosopher, saint, and Carmelite Edith Stein shall assist the work in its attempt to understand human connectedness through empathy. In her 1916 doctoral dissertation: *On the Problem of Empathy*, she phenomenologically investigated the intertwined aspects of empathy pointing out that such an approach poses intricate and overlapping problems that obscure and defer a holistic understanding of persons. She recognizes that a spiritual dimension is also at play in an empathetic understanding. Values escape into the hole of a causal and motivational connection which flows from the spiritual source.

The research intends to establish the phenomenological ground of empathy which eventually opens up the spiritual dimension of the empathetic understanding of other individuals. Through the works of Edith Stein, the researcher inquires into how it is possible to become a teacher of empathy, a model of relation, and to live a life founded on a great trust and absolute abandonment to the mysterious dimension. Through this, the study hopes to