something that cannot be used but only given over to spectacular exhibition or to consumption. In attempting to force the issue of how profanation would allow for a new use so that we may play with whatever it is that is supposed to profaned, Agamben cites several examples, ranging from the irrelevant to the bizarre. To wit: a cat playing with a ball of yarn “liberates the mouse from being a prey and the predatory activity from being necessarily directed toward the capture and death of the mouse” (86).

As we could have expected, pornography (and by extension, fashion shows) take the pride of place in Agamben’s indictment of capitalism for its abominable creation of the unprofanable as such. But this is a rhetorical gesture that is so sweeping as well as swiping that it is unusable in the long run. Agamben’s argument, despite its learned references, is so segmented in addition to being weird, it is difficult to make sense of the reasons Agamben gives for choosing, of all things, pornography as the paragon of the unprofanable created by the religion of capitalism.

To be sure, this work remains vulnerable to objections and criticism at multiple points. Not only can Agamben’s argument be readily countered by liberatory examples of profanation currently underway in popular culture, but for Agamben to insist so narrowly that profanation is a political task for some future generation only weakens what is potentially convincing about it. The possibility of anything, including profanation, holds sway only to the extent that its own impossibility does; and it is between these two poles of potentiality that the ethics of bios politikos gets vectorized vis-à-vis the nomos of politics—whether as the polis or the camp. There is much pleasure to be had in reading Profanations, but, ultimately, Agamben is not persuasive as to why or how the task of profanation should be held as a more fundamental political objective over that of any other ideal that also has a claim on the possibility of eudaimonia.

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The Philosophy of Edith Stein
Antonio Calcagno
Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007; 151 pages

In the Introduction, Calcagno contrasts his text with many other works available on Stein. He says that his aim is not simply to present Stein’s ideas but to
engage "them in a broader philosophical context" (xi). This is a much-needed work, and Calcagno's vision is an important one. I think—like Calcagno—that Stein is one of the great 20th-century thinkers. Her works, however, are not frequently read, and it is part of Calcagno's goal to help correct this oversight, showing some of the significance of Stein's work for more recent thought.

Throughout, Calcagno does not focus on detailed studies of any particular text nor on sustained critical analysis of a single theme. Rather, he puts out an invitation to notice some of Stein's philosophical insights and their great import for contemporary discussions. His interpretations of Stein's life and work are provocative and important. He claims, for example, that the controversies surrounding Stein's beatification and canonization should not be seen as fundamentally at odds with Stein's life. Her *life*, and not simply her death, was unconventional. He also vividly brings out questions of the significance of gender for phenomenology and accounts of consciousness. He says, for example, that "[u]ltimately, she must be viewed as the first phenomenologist to introduce and develop the notion of gender in relation to the phenomenological question of the essence of the person in general" (64). He emphasizes the profound significance of Stein's phenomenological studies of community, not simply in the works with these titles but throughout Stein's writings. He notes, for example, that "[u]ltimately, Stein has made here two vital contributions to phenomenology that are often ignored. First, she identifies and describes the nature of the lived-experience of community. Second, in introducing this distinction, she brings to the fore a crucial difference between empathy and communal lived experiences. This distinction was not addressed fully by her contemporaries" (35). Calcagno puts Stein in conversation with Alain Finkielkraut, defending her account of human nature against Finkielkraut's objections to the whole project of articulating a common human nature. In the process, Calcagno brings out Stein's distinction between the *I* and the *self* and her striking account of care. And, he raises what I think is a rather fascinating question, "is the state responsible for the immortal soul of the person?"

The manuscript is well-organized. The essays are each relatively independent but organized roughly chronologically. This makes the book useful to scholars interested in one or two areas of Stein's work, but uninterested in all the topics addressed. The range of topics is impressive: Stein's life, her account of community in her phenomenological writings, her political thought, empathy and feminism, her account of human freedom, and her evaluation of
Heidegger. Calcagno draws from both works easily available in English and from texts not yet translated. The latter is a particularly important service for Stein studies.

Although the essays are only loosely joined together, nonetheless certain themes continually reappear. Chief among them is our dependence on one another and our nature as deeply communal. Calcagno describes us, for example, as a "multiplicity of persons" (see, e.g., p. 37) and distinguishes a three-fold meaning to this claim in Stein’s thought. This understanding of our interdependence is significant for Stein’s evaluation of Heidegger’s work, her account of our political life, her vision of the distinctiveness of the feminine, etc. But, Calcagno rightly points out that Stein never loses the individual to some greater community; she maintains a distinctive and unique individual core present in each of us, marking us distinct and individual even as we are also highly relational.

Calcagno’s concerns and questions are fresh; his interpretation of Stein is both reliable and distinctive—it will open up new lines of thought for both amateurs and specialists reading Stein; and his style is dialectical. He continually raises new questions, provides insights for answering them, and raises further concerns and questions.

Like a good dinner guest, Calcagno leaves us longing for more of his company. I wanted to know, for example, more about how Stein’s account of care compares with Heidegger’s, how the inclusion of gender might be significant for our account of the ego, and how Stein argues for the immortality of the soul. Calcagno moves through little-trodden territory. He does not wear down a clear path, but he does show that these treks would be fruitful both for Stein studies and contemporary philosophy more generally.

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Dialectics of the Self: Transcending Charles Taylor
Ian Fraser
Exeter and Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2007; viii + 205 pages

After a series of critical essays on some aspects of Taylor’s thought, published in both Philosophy & Social Criticism and Contemporary Political Theory, Ian Fraser has brought this research together in his Dialectics of the Self: Transcending Charles Taylor. In this work Fraser offers “an immanent and tran-