

7 The recognition of human dignity in the person living with dementia: reflections in the light of Edith Stein's phenomenology

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The word *dementia* refers in Latin to the undoing of the mind, to de-minding.¹ In English 'to be demented' still carries the Latin meaning of being out of one's mind, of being mad; someone or something can 'drive you demented' if they are extremely irritating, repetitive, confusing, senseless or silly. Generally, however, *dementia* is thought to refer to a spectrum of mental illnesses affecting in particular (but not exclusively) people in old age: illnesses having a physiological substratum responsive to medical treatment, but which are unfortunately not considered curable at the present time.

Dementia is generally understood to first affect the memory, which Augustine regarded as the place where the soul is rooted in the eternal ideas. In what follows I shall argue, in the light of Edith Stein's phenomenology, that it affects more broadly what she calls 'the function of the I': the ability to *constitute*, to *identify things*, and to *recognise*.² When one cannot recognise, one cannot bring the ideas, as Augustine understood them, to bear on past and present experience, and as a consequence one cannot conceptualise and remember. Dementia seems to be experienced by the subject suffering from it as the world becoming increasingly indistinct, confusing and unmanageable. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the ability to empathise, value and feel is diminished (except insofar as it presupposes identification).³ The consequent change in the balance between cognitive and spiritual functions may occasion the development of what could be called a heightened spiritual awareness, since this has to compensate for the intellectual debility acquired. If, as I shall argue, the experience of the 'dark night of the soul' can be helpful for understanding the experience of the person suffering from dementia, it may also explain why spiritual communication is still possible and may indeed be significantly enhanced and enriched.

Dementia presents a challenge for both primary and secondary sufferers. Both have to deal with the fact that *this could be me*.⁴ For the carer: it could be me who had dementia; for the sufferer: it could be me who had the task of looking after a person suffering like me. The challenge is that both sides must accept and understand both roles as they are reflected in the eyes of the other; but when it is met, dementia opens the possibility of communication about the deepest of human realities affecting both parties equally: the soul, the person, the spirit beyond the mind, and life after death.⁵

The challenge is not however, easily accepted.

It is not easily accepted that dementia is a human possibility and hence that I also could get dementia. When it is not accepted by the carer, the evasion is experienced by the primary sufferer as an avoidance of the recognition due to him or her, an avoidance which he or she may well understand. This understanding, however, may well be associated with grief for the loss of a relation to the one who no longer recognises, a grief so deep that it may produce either a rejection of one's own experience (because it cannot be experienced by the other) and/or a deepening of love issuing in a waiting for the other until the other is ready to recognise.

In the opposite direction it is not easy for the dementia sufferer to accept the limitations of the carers, especially because he or she has lost the ability to estimate how much is being done for them and what it 'costs'. Trust must replace the lost overview, otherwise the burden of care will become still greater. This is, in my experience, often well assessed by the sufferer. Thus trust becomes defence of loved ones, one *must* take the risk *and* suffer the consequences for *their* sake. Accepting that such vulnerability cannot ultimately be successfully protected by the loved ones amounts to the acceptance of the possibility of death. The sufferers, i.e. the primary sufferer and the secondary sufferers (the carers), can help each other only by their acceptance, and by waiting for each other to accept *living* with the possibility of death and dementia.

When the recognition that 'this could be me' succeeds, however, the profoundest of shared happiness is possible, as is communication about the most important human realities as mentioned. To meet the challenge presented to us by dementia we are thus in need of a reflection on who we are so as to enable recognition. To provide this we shall first look at the structure of the human person as proposed by Edith Stein. Then, again with Stein's help, we shall look at the act of empathy, in which we are aware of the experience of the other, and thus also of the experience of the one who is suffering from dementia. Finally, still under Stein's guidance, we shall compare the one suffering from dementia with the person living through the mystical experience of the 'dark night of the soul', as the latter is described by St John of the Cross, and discussed in Stein's final work *The Science of the Cross*.

For Stein, the human person does not exist in isolation. It is raised by other human beings, learns to understand who it is with the help of others, stands in constant exchange with others even in its own thoughts, and can think systematically because it has learned language, which it also has learned from and shares with others of its own kind.⁶ We consequently experience from two perspectives, like we see with two eyes, as we experience on the one hand what we experience ourselves personally, and then on the other what we experience others to experience (anger at our action in an angry glance, consideration in a kind gesture, for example). This double experience allows us to talk about what 'we' experience: 'we' went to the cinema; 'we' had a lovely time at the party; 'we' were deeply saddened by the news. We, in other words, exist in community, and our way of understanding the world is through and through influenced by the understanding of others. We can say the world is socially constructed, or as Stein says 'intersubjectively constituted' in that it matters what others think for what I can think about the world, and in the opposite direction it matters what I think for others' understanding of the world.⁷ What we think of the world constitutes a reality, which we must all deal with in order to deal with the world as it is. When someone regards me as a traitor it constitutes a reality I have to deal with even if I do not share the view.

The people who we are, who recognise each other as such, live together and form many intricate institutions, groups and patterns. We are characterised each by having an 'I', which forms the centre of a person, in that the 'I' is the pole of experience, of my experience. 'I' learn to constitute myself as a person, i.e. understand myself to be the subject not only of experience, but also of motivation and valuation, just like others are experienced by me to be subjects of their own experience, inclusive of their motivation and valuation.⁸ In the process of getting to know who I am as I grow up, I also come to identify myself as having a body, which embodies my zero point of orientation and allows me to experience the external world by means of various senses, just like those around me have bodies that are similar to mine (even if those of cats are specifically different, and those of women still more similar to mine than those of men).⁹ Between the externality of my body and the internality of my 'I', I am aware of an inner 'sphere' in which I am alive with the life of my body, which I can feel to be tired, in pain, at rest, exhausted or vigorous, and which Stein calls the psyche.¹⁰ It is in this sphere that motivations are felt, the psyche is like the sounding board of the spiritual world of values, but it is still, like a musical instrument, a physical medium, standing under the influence of causality, and hence susceptible to be influenced for example by medication (as well as by the weather, electricity and other physical forces). The psyche is also experienced, however, as pertaining to the psychological 'I', which again stands under the influence of the personality of the person who I am. What is felt, the objects of

motivation, the values I experience, are experienced, in contrast to the physical world, as beyond the influence of causality, as being distinct precisely by being motivating, not causing.¹¹ The person knows him- or herself as free, i.e. as capable of motivating himself, of choosing between motivations experienced, of turning his attention here or there, in short, as capable of motivation. Being spiritual hence simply means to be motivated, and the spirit as such is motivated.¹² When we say the person is spiritual in essence we mean he/she experiences themselves as primarily motivated, not caused. The personality consists of the person's habitual value responses, reflecting the character of the person and, in psychological beings, his or her temperament conditioned by talents and handicaps. It is the personality that allows the soul to unfold or deepen, so that a shallow personality, i.e. one who does not access the (spiritual) motivating power of the higher values, leaves the depths of the soul in shadow incapable of finding expression in the person's life. At the opposite end of the spectrum we find the person whose personality, because of its ascending to the motivations stemming from the highest of values, allows for the illumination of the depths of the soul, so that it finds expression in the life and acts of the person. We call such a person a real or strong personality, not recognising the same personal distinctness to the superficial person.¹³

People are very different, and there is a wide divergence as to what different persons consider profound. We are puzzled by each other's sense of profundity and learn from each other, and it is in this way that our experience is challenging to others. We value differently, and as a consequence we draw motivational energy from different values: some appreciate art, others science, some love sport, others videogames. When we suffer, given that suffering drains our mental energy, we look for sources of motivational energy that can help us replenish our energy reservoir: we look for values that are higher than those we have known up until now, which obviously have not been sufficient to power us so that our life feels comfortable. We look to others to see whether they know of such values of higher motivating power which we do not, and we look in particular to those who have suffered like we suffer now, to see what they have been able to find. In this way the sufferer strangely leads the way towards the depths, because he or she must search for more, whereas the contented one needs nothing further.

The mind, which we can lose by becoming demented, is not exactly this ability to be motivated, the spiritual capacity to receive energy from the sources of power which the values are. The person suffering from dementia seems to be able to feel, and often much deeper than the persons of his or her surroundings. Bouts of extreme anguish or deep contentment in the sun or in response to a smile testify to this. Dementia rather seems to rob the person of the ability to identify in an enduring manner (i.e. *in time* and therefore remember *over time*) what is experienced and to think about it (we cannot think, i.e. reason from one

thought to the next, when we cannot remember and hold on to something we have identified or constituted). The experience itself, however, is experienced insofar as the motivating powers motivate without the mediation of constitution. The experience of the self is there too, not as reflection on thoughts, but as a direct experience of the realities of the soul, without the interpretation imposed by the superstructure of the mind. Often this awareness is breaking out into expression through the suffering at hand, so that states of despair or bliss show on the face and in the entire body posture. The mind which throughout the person's life has been its help to understand and put order onto the world now cracks open like a shell to be discarded ('If the grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and die it will bear no fruit', Jn 12:24), to let the soul shine through in its otherworldly beauty and prepare it for what seems to be a transit – insofar as the soul does not seem to be completely dependent upon this reality of time – through detachment from the body. The soul must part with the mind too insofar as it is depending for its operation on the brain.

The losing of one's mind in dementia thus, on such an account, leaves us to contemplate the soul exposed, reverting back to an original innocence lying even before its formation by the personality and the habitual and ultimate value responses of the person (which may or may not stay intact) and still living, but only 'out of the depths' and often without words or explanations. The forgetting of past destructive habits often gives the soul a second chance of being itself in its original innocence, experiencing the world anew as a child. Dementia seems like a rehearsal for death, which lets us, those who are dying and those who are to be left behind for a while, glimpse a life beyond the mind and its dependence on time, which is spiritual and more valuable than anything we can lose. When we can affirm this life in each other by recognising it, the sufferings of the demented person are transfigured and he or she can be allowed to be the instigator of our common appreciation of that which we hold in common: human dignity. He or she is then allowed to lead us into the mystery where he or she is more at home than we are because of their privilege of suffering.

Empathy: our experience of the other

We use empathy not only to discover and examine what the other is experiencing, but also to establish what is expected of us: as indeed that relies on others' experience of expectation. We thus use empathy to understand the other's understanding of us: by 'reiterated empathy' we empathise with the other's empathy as regards us, and in this manner we get to understand what he or she thinks of us. Empathy is not *per se* sympathy: by means of empathy I can access the experience of the other even if I do not share his motivations, but just understand them as possible. I use empathy, for example, when I attempt to solve a crime mystery: I examine the possible motives which I read through the

characters of the persons involved, even as they attempt to hide sides of themselves that might reveal their motives. Empathy is thus not an 'extra' in our lives: it is an essential means of orienting ourselves in the world and of understanding it. It is an act the object of which is the experience of the other, in the same way as perception is the act which has the perceived for its object, or memory the remembered for its object.¹⁴

I do not always, however, understand what the other is experiencing. To stay with the crime investigation scenario: I can see somebody experiencing what looks like remorse, for example, but I cannot see the object of his remorse, nor can I be sure, unless I know the person well, that I don't mistake the expression I take to be remorse for his peculiar way of looking pensive. I can be limited in my ability to empathise on three fronts: 1. I can be limited in my spiritual experience due to my personality structure (if, for example, I deny the possibility of there being anything like remorse, due to a remorse I cannot myself get over). 2. I can be limited in my life experience (of how motivational relationships are in fact built up, e.g. of what in fact can lead to remorse). 3. I can be limited in my knowledge of the physical expression of the spiritual experience in the other (and for example mistake the cat's enlarged pupils as a sign of confidence, when it in fact is a sign of fear, or the man's frown against the sun for an expression of remorse).

In the first instance the limitation of my ability to empathise is due to my own personality structure. In this connection it should be emphasised that being insensitive is not the same as being unable to empathise: the insensitive person overlooks motivations of the other, and often does so for particular reasons which can be understood. This may be to solve a crime or promote a career, but the persons thus motivated are capable of doing either of these things only because they are capable of empathising, and knowing what is expected of them. Insensitivity is thus a chosen state, a character trait, which may also be motivated by the negative value of suffering, which one does not want to face in the other or in oneself. It can be a bracketing of experience, which pretends some (type of) experience not to be there. Insensitivity is curable however, i.e. the person 'suffering' from it can stop being insensitive and start experiencing the suffering he or she did not want to face beforehand.¹⁵ Then a personal development is called for, and usually follows, which generally speaking is considered as positive by all involved. Insensitivity is very common and is mostly a protective mechanism, but it does have serious consequences for those who are not understood and for the character development of the person choosing it.

In the second instance empathy is restricted by a more genuine lack of personal experience: when nothing like it has been experienced previously by the empathiser, when he or she has nothing to compare to the experience facing him or her. This restriction is linked to the third type of restriction mentioned:

that of experience with this particular type of expression. If I have never experienced unreciprocated love, I shall not be able to recognise the signs of that in others at first sight. If I have never experienced a nervous breakdown, I shall not be able to understand or properly imagine what is involved in the experience of that without introduction. Both of these restrictions, however, do not rely on a chosen refusal, and are therefore in principle open for correction by further experience, in contrast with the former type, which is in principle closed to correction until the subject lifts the ban on his own sensitivity.

In the meeting with the person affected by dementia, all of these limitations are at play. On the one hand we might not understand what is involved in losing one's mind in this manner. Often we do not want to know either, and we adopt an insensitive attitude that sometimes encapsulates the entire demented person and thus isolates him or her entirely from our experience by so to speak, blotting him out. This is for the demented person a source of great distress insofar as he or she is aware of the motives for this insensitivity and regrets being the source of such dissimulated distress in loved ones or relations. The better we can accept the demented person's suffering, as a suffering that in principle is possible for us as well (otherwise I could not empathise with it), the better he or she can accept it as a way forward. This way forward is a way that involves exploring uncharted waters and has value for the entire human community because it is possible for human beings to experience in this way, and because communicating about this type of experience is of relevance to all because of this.

On the other hand we must not underestimate the newness of the experience, and hence that it is not immediately accessible to us, without our having experienced something like it. To understand what it feels like to lose one's mind or the ability to identify and recognise requires a transformation 'like' the one undergone by the person directly affected by dementia. The primary sufferer can help us accede to this when we listen to him or her as someone who shows us something of what may be to come, of who we are, through and beyond death, as someone who can help us to get there ourselves. But it seems clear that we must prepare ourselves for feeling as lost and disorientated as they are in order to understand what it is they are showing us. And such preparation is indeed worthwhile, not just because we by means of it can live in solidarity with the primary sufferer, but also because it is – because of this – the 'normal' development of the soul as it matures and readies itself for a greater degree of understanding of all things human. It is normal that our categories would be not only stretched, but also broken by life and recast many times as we move through our experience attempting to understand why we are here and what we are supposed to be doing. It is normal for the soul to be affected by the suffering, and thus to live with it to obtain what Stein calls a 'science of the cross'.

The 'Dark Night of the Soul'

The passion of Jesus is one of those experiences that are available to us through empathy, as we hear about it or read the gospels. His carrying of and dying on the cross – a Roman instrument of torture and social control through shame – represents a way of dying that leaves few people unmoved. For Stein the acceptance of the possibility of such suffering of the innocent, together with its potentially liberating effect on others, was the occasion to contemplate the effect that the acceptance of this experience could have on the one accepting. She calls it a 'science' because – beyond the shattering of the easy categories of comfortable living – it attains a higher ground, a more secure foothold in understanding how things 'really are'. Thus this science is of a truth that is 'alive and active', i.e. it transforms the person in possession of it from within, penetrating his or her vision of the world. 'It is buried in the soul like a seed that takes root there and grows making a distinct impression on the soul.'¹⁶ When this soul expresses itself concerning its experience something like a theory of this experience can be constructed. This theory is 'Christian philosophy' insofar as it builds upon the assimilated acceptance of the cross as being borne by Jesus Christ (i.e. by the one who was to come, the Son of Man), and the fostering of this experience allows for a fruit to grow.¹⁷ The fruit of this science is a particular deepening of the view of the human being, allowing for a keener observation and a more flexible understanding of the depths and even the root of the soul, which Stein portrays in the following manner:

The thoughts of the heart are the original life of the soul at the ground of her being, at a depth that precedes all splitting into different faculties and their activity. There the soul lives precisely as she is in herself, beyond all that will be called forth in her through created beings. Although this most interior region is the dwelling of God and the place where the soul is united to God, her own life flows out of here before the life of union begins; and this is so, even in cases where such a union never occurs. For every soul has an inmost region and its being is its life.

But this primary life is not only hidden from other spirits but from the soul herself. This is so for various reasons. Primary life is formless. The thoughts of the heart are absolutely not thoughts in the usual sense of the word; they are not clearly outlined, arranged, and comprehensible constructions of the thinking intellect. They must pass through various formulations before they become such constructions. First, they must rise out of the ground of the heart. Then they arrive at a first threshold, where they become noticeable. This noticing is a far more original manner of being conscious than is perception by the intellect. It too lies before the splitting into faculties and activities. It lacks the clarity of purely sensible perception; on the other hand, it is richer than a bare grasping by the intellect. That

which arises is perceived as bearing a stamp of value on the basis of which a decision is made: whether to allow what is rising to come up or not ...

At the threshold where the rising movements are perceived, types of recognisable spiritual faculties begin to split off and conceivable structures are formed: to these belong thoughts elaborated by the intellect with their reasonable arrangement (these are interior words for which, then, exterior words can be found) movements of the mind and impulses of the will that, as active energies, enter all that is connected with the spiritual life.¹⁸

Thus the science of the cross allows us perceive the root of the soul, where the thoughts of the heart arise, and to notice what thus arises, not only in ourselves but also in others whether we are demented or not. This is because it has passed through the idea that recognisability (constitution and identification) is necessary for the life of the spirit, and has come out the other side, where suffering can be allowed for and accepted, even when it means losing one's mind. It is as such that the science of the cross is particularly helpful for those who deal with people with cognitive impairment: it allows for a type of communication that does not rely on distinctly-formed faculties and their specific functions, but which accedes to the deepest spiritual root of the soul where possibly the last decisive 'choices' regarding its life and afterlife are 'taken', where the drama of the soul's transition to life beyond time is played out.

The fact that the soul is robbed of distinct experience, in senses, memory and intellect, is a help to it insofar as the thoughts of the heart no longer are camouflaged, drowned out or disturbed by active constitutional activity. This is what the spiritual director can help the soul who is undergoing the dark night of the soul to realise. He or she recognises the soul's suffering as a sign of its maturation and knows it as the hidden secret of divine love that union can be obtained ultimately only in this way. The dark night of the soul, in its various stages as portrayed by St John of the Cross, is thus in fact the form the maturing of the soul takes: it corresponds to its deepening, to its accessing its own spiritual depths by means of identification with all things human. By doing so the soul relativises its identification with its physical, psychological or intelligible identity, to rest as spiritual at the point where it will be taken up above itself to fulfil and lose itself in the eternal life of God. The person suffering from dementia is given the same opportunity as the mystic, whether or not such experience was sought after or longed for in whatever form. Like for the mystic, the person with cognitive impairment has no say in the choice of its condition: it is night, it has to be accepted. Raving against the night may be an option in the early stages, but soon will come such impotence that even that is no longer possible. And here lies the opportunity and the possibility of peace beyond what the world can give: peace that is salvific for the one 'suffering' it and for everyone else suffering with the one affected: when the dark night of the soul is lived, whether induced by dementia or actively accepted in prayer, *for us*, or just with

surrender, its fruit is understanding and the ability to accompany others on the road towards what the mystical tradition calls 'perfection'. This perfection is of course nothing but love.

Conclusion

The person suffering from dementia can teach us, and lead us into, the dark night of the soul. And we can reach him or her much better if we dare to go there of our own accord by letting the message of the cross take root in us like a seed. As this, however, is required for our own 'perfection', our reaching maturity of soul as a person, being challenged to go there by the presence of dementia in a loved one or a person in our care, is a help for us to reach our 'full potential', to become more human. Whichever way we turn it, the suffering induced by dementia, is, in the one suffering from it primarily or in the secondary sufferers, salvific as soon as it is accepted as painfully meaningful: from him or her flow streams of living water for whomsoever cares or dares to stop and drink.

Notes

1. This paper was first given at the International Conference of the IACB (International Association of Catholic Bioethicists) in Cologne, 14 July 2009, in the Cardinal Schulte Haus. A German translation is published in the proceedings of a symposium organised by Internationales Forschungszentrum für soziale und ethische Fragen (ifz) in Salzburg with the title *Leid und Mitleid bei Edith Stein*, 17–18. November 2011, Malgorzata Bogaczyk (ed). Stein takes the term 'constitution' from Husserl. In *On the Problem of Empathy*, Chapters 3 and 4 concern 'constitutional issues' (introd. to Chapter 3), in that they concern how the 'I' identifies itself as a psycho-physical individual and a person. Husserl understood constitution as the transcendental function through which an object comes to make sense – he characterised constitution as the 'central viewpoint of phenomenology' (*Ideas*, § 86). That there is more to the 'I' than constitution is an idea we find more developed in Stein than in Husserl. She regards the person as the subject of the experience of value (motivation) whether in feeling, valuation or action. *On the Problem of Empathy*, Chapter IV, 2. *On the Problem of Empathy* is a book about the epistemological condition for intersubjective experience and knowledge constituted by empathy. Empathy is me experiencing the experience of the other (whether or not I quite understand what the other is experiencing). I can thus empathise without knowing (exactly) what the other is experiencing, but not without being open to experiencing it.
2. As regards the soul, please see *On the Problem of Empathy*, Chapter III, 3; as regards the person, Chapter IV. By 'the spirit beyond the mind' I here mean that which motivates in a not readily identifiable manner, that which moves us profoundly before we understand it. By 'life after death' I refer to the experience of life beyond the mental life, which to the person living with dementia becomes curiously real, as the movement of the heart often makes itself felt without intermediary mental experience, and which is experienced in the midst of the physical death of illness and severe weakness. The person who is totally depleted of psychic energy often experiences this state as a kind of death, which, often to the person's own surprise, is not quite death but contains a still life, that seems to be beyond time, in which identification of things in successive stages is not of great importance, but where human kindness carries a meaningfulness way beyond what the normally functioning young person usually expects.
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6. Stein's philosophical anthropology is inaugurated by her early works *On the Problem of Empathy* (1917) and *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (1921–5), diversified in *An Investigation concerning the State* (1922–5) and *Introduction to Philosophy* (1919–31), before it is consolidated in the twin work *The Structure of the Human Person/What is the Human Being?* (1931–2). For the early works please see Marianne Sawicki: *Body Text and Science*, Kluwer, 1998, and my own 'Study-Guide to Edith Stein's Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities', *Yearbook of the Irish Philosophical Society* 2004, 40–76 (available on the web). For the later works see also Sarah Borden: *Edith Stein, Continuum*, 2003, and my 'Edith Stein's Philosophy of Education in The Structure of the Human Person' in *What Price the Unity?*, ed. T. Kelly, special issue of Maynooth Philosophical Papers. It is clear that Stein's philosophical anthropology gets further developed in her last works *Finite and Eternal Being and Science of the Cross*, now understood as a teaching on the maturing of the human soul placed under the sign of the Cross. Both in the twin work *The Structure of the Human Person/What is the Human Being?* and in *Finite and Eternal Being* it is argued how the Christian faith and doctrine may inform thought to make it still more adequate than if it did not rely on the Revelation of the salvific mystery of the life and death of Jesus Christ. *The Science of the Cross* relies on this.
7. In German the works are available shortly in the new critical Herder edition: *Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe*, in 27 volumes. In English, several translations exist, published by ICS Publications, Washington DC.
8. *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, treatise II: *Individual and Community*.
9. *On the Problem of Empathy*, III, 5 and IV, 4.
10. *On the Problem of Empathy*, III, 4.
11. *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, treatise I: *Sentient Causality*.
12. *Ibid.*, section III and V.
13. *On the Problem of Empathy*, IV, 2: 'motivation is the lawfulness of spiritual life'.
14. *Individual and Community*, II, § 3, c and § 4, d. *Einführung in die Philosophie*, II, b.
15. *On the Problem of Empathy*, II.
16. This phenomenon is analysed by Scheler as *ressentiment* (*Ressentiment*, trans by W. Heine with an introduction by L. Coser, New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), and as such taken over by Stein.
17. *The Science of the Cross*, trans Josephine Koepffel, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, ICS Publications, 9–10. *Kreuzeswissenschaft*, ESGA, 5.
18. Stein confesses her philosophy to be 'Christian' from her twin anthropology onwards (although Potency and Act may not fall into this category). Her justification for and discussion of this characterisation can be found in *Finite and Eternal Being*, Chapter I, § 4. That her philosophy remains phenomenological, and that the title of this article thus is justified, is something for which I have argued in an article to be published in *Communio* 'Why do we need the Philosophy of Edith Stein?'.
Ibid., 157–8. *Kreuzeswissenschaft*, ESGA, 131–2, II, 2, § 3, b. 'Das Innerste der Seele und die Gedanken des Herzens'.

8 Genetic enhancement as care or as domination? The ethics of asymmetrical relationships in the upbringing of children

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Should a society oriented towards justice provide parents with the possibility of enhancing their children's genes? The opposing arguments of authors in the Rawls School and of the theorist of communicative action, Jürgen Habermas, are analysed in terms of their key concepts. Their positions are then assessed from the point of view of the principles of the pedagogical task to educate towards autonomy under conditions of asymmetry. They each call for respect both of children's difference and of their dependence, and they ask for parents to moderate their expectations. In the light of this, Habermas' critique of genetic intervention, based on a Kantian understanding of autonomy as the capacity to be moral, on Kierkegaard's concept of being able to be oneself, and on respect for finitude, is here to be justified.

I am right and you are wrong because I am big and you are small.

Ronald Dahl, *Matilda*

Judging from their indignant response to Miss Trunchbull's view of their place in the world, children are well aware of their vulnerability and the need for adults to learn to handle asymmetric relationships in a way that respects the junior partner. While 'Crunchem Hall' may be considered too black a foil against which to reflect on the dangerous descents built into pedagogical interaction, I want to investigate a recent debate in applied ethics that could offer a more subtle version of the adult temptation to condescension and control: the question of the permissibility of the genetic enhancement of one's offspring. (This is addressed in Part I.) How do the proposals of the Rawls School and Habermas' critique of liberal eugenics compare with pedagogical insights into the principles of an education towards autonomy? The current enhancement