What is Human Dignity? An Application of Edith Stein's Phenomenology

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Abstract: Edith Stein did write a few comments on human dignity, but nothing that amounts to a thorough analysis. The idea was formulated explicitly as the foundation of the Human Rights Tradition after the Second World War, and as such it would no doubt have interested her greatly. The drafters of the declaration of human rights deliberately refrained from appealing to an agreement about the philosophical foundation of the idea, since UNESCO advised it might not be possible to find a solution all could accept. In Stein's spirit of conciliation of different traditions, however, and with the aid of her phenomenology, we can propose to understand it phenomenologically as **the fundamental value of the human being, entitling it to respect**. In this paper I detail how it comes about that we with quasi-necessity identify human dignity in this way by deploying a phenomenological analysis as Stein taking Stein's analyses as its model.

Introduction

Edith Stein did write a few comments on human dignity, but nothing that amounts to a thorough analysis. Jadwiga Guerrero van der Meijden, addressing person and dignity in Edith Stein's writings, says as much: 'Stein, the majority of whose philosophical writings examine the idea of the human person, hardly ever used the German terms *Würde* or *Menschenwürde*, which fully entered anthropological debates only after World War II, when she was no longer living.'[1]

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[1] Jadwiga Guerrero van der Meijden: *Person and Dignity in Edith Stein's Writings. Investigated in Comparison to the Writings of the Doctors of the Church and the Magisterial Documents of the Catholic Church* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) p. 13-14. Gerrero van der Meijden states that the aim of her study is 'to investigate the conception of the human person In Edith Stein's philosophical anthropology and its

Indeed, the idea was only formulated explicitly as the basic principle of the Declaration of Human Rights and the foundation of the Human Rights Tradition after the Second World War, and as such it would no doubt have interested Stein greatly.[2] The drafters of the declaration of human rights deliberately refrained from appealing to an agreement about the philosophical foundation of the idea, since they could not agree on one. UNESCO's philosophers' committee advised they were unlikely to be able to find a solution all could accept.[3] 'Maritain [who was on this committee] liked to tell the story of how a visitor at one meeting expressed astonishment that champions of violently opposed ideologies had been able to agree on a list of fundamental rights. The man was told: "Yes, we agree about the rights but on condition no one asks us why."'[4] In Stein's spirit of conciliation of different philosophical traditions, however, and with the aid of her phenomenology underpinning it, we can propose to understand human dignity, independently of any foundational metaphysics or ideology as **the fundamental value of the human being, entitling it to respect**, expecting to find agreement among representatives of contrasting metaphysical positions and opposed ideologies for this definition. In this paper I shall detail how it comes about that we with quasi-necessity identify human dignity in this way by deploying a phenomenological analysis, which takes its cue from Stein's investigations.

We shall first propose there to be different metaphysical or ideological frameworks which tend to account for human dignity in characteristically different ways (1). The frameworks we discuss will be limited to those having played a major role in the Western world, but other frameworks can be envisaged to have played similar roles elsewhere, and the definition could arguably also

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relation to the Christian notion of human dignity.' (p. 14). As our concern is wider, interested as we are in the idea of human dignity of which the 'Christian notion' is but one understanding, Guerrero van der Meijden's focus is different compared to ours. We shall here apply Stein's early phenomenology of values (which does not bear the stamp of her subsequent Christian commitment nor is it incompatible with it) to the idea of human dignity as such. Guerrero van der Meijden's idea of *symphilosophising* (p. 15) with the author is nevertheless one in which we also recognize our task.

[2] Mary Ann Glendon: *A World Made New. Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2002).

[3] Jacques Maritain: *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944). *Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations* (London: Wingate, 1949). See Glendon: A world Made New 73-78.

[4] Glendon: A World Made New, 77.

be meaningful for these. Then we shall discuss the proposed definition, which can be understood to not rely on any metaphysical standpoint, but instead be formulated in purely phenomenological terms (2). Finally, we shall explain the phenomenological intuition underlying the identification of human dignity (3) in four steps. First, we shall explain (a) what 'constitution' means, since it is this technical, phenomenological term designating identification within time-characterised (time-constituting) experience which allows us to phenomenologically describe what happens when we 'get' an idea, arrive at some insight, or perceive something. Then we shall show what goes into (b) constituting the human being from within phenomenologically reduced experience and how it comes about that we identify the human being as the type of being that we are. Following that, we shall discuss how we (c) constitute values as motivating powers and take them as our own, i.e., let ourselves be motivated by them. And finally, we shall show how we come to (d) identify the fundamental value of the human being, i.e., human dignity, from within the type of experience that is ours, i.e., human experience.

1. Different metaphysical or ideological frameworks accounting for human dignity

Many people regard human dignity as an idea that is grounded in a view of the world that can be expressed in philosophical terms. Such a view of the world can be termed metaphysical or ideological depending on how important the role played by rational first principles is thought to be in it. The above-mentioned UNESCO group 'harboured no illusions about how deep the agreement they had discovered went'.[5] It viewed the agreement as obviously manifest but were unsure about what explained it in the absence of a common worldview. But the group did not 'regard this lack of consensus on foundations as fatal. [...] The UN charter, despite much evidence to the contrary, had professed the signers' "faith in freedom and democracy."' The drafters had identified, the group thought, a shared faith, strong enough to carry universal

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[5] Glendon: A World Made New, 77.

agreement: 'grounded in another belief that is often sorely tested: "faith in the inherent dignity of men and women." A faith based upon a faith was not much to go on, perhaps. But it was enough, the philosophers concluded, "to enable a great task to be undertaken."'[6]

Since the task was the upholding of freedom, justice, and peace in the world – a task greater than which no task seems to present itself – the philosophers' committee at UNESCO took the agreement or the faith founding it to include that freedom, justice, and peace *depended* 'upon the recognition of human dignity and rights'[7]. An explanation and foundation for human dignity from its social telos was thus surreptitiously implicit in what was agreed: human dignity is that the recognition of and respect for which allows for freedom, justice, and peace in the world. What was also implicit was that recognition of human dignity or respect for it is not something that can be taken for granted, but something we must attempt to achieve collectively and individually: that recognition and respect depends on *us*.[8] *We* must place human dignity higher than any other value: this is the point of the collective commitment expressed in the declaration. Was there any need for a further foundation for human dignity? Given that the challenging nature of the teleological explanation was veiled by the language of 'rights', the different frameworks could now serve the function of contributing to explain what human dignity is in different ways. In this way human dignity could play the role of being a cornerstone in a new, common framework, a shared fundamental value for the human rights tradition while other frameworks could account for it in support of the agreement, which practically may rest on these in as much as they make the idea intelligible to the agreement's various parties.

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[6] Glendon: A World Made New, 77-78.
[7] Glendon: A World Made New, 176.
[8] Jürgen Habermas: 'The Concept of Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights' in *Metaphilosophy*, July 2010, vol. 41/4, pp. 464-480. '"Human dignity" performs the function of a seismograph that registers what is constitutive for a democratic legal order, namely, just those rights that the citizens of a political community must grant themselves if they are to be able to *respect* one another as members of a voluntary association of free and equal persons. *The guarantee of these human rights gives rise to the status of citizens who, as subjects of equal rights, have a claim to be respected in their human dignity.'* P. 469.

For what concerns the Western World three worldviews provided independent metaphysical or ideological foundations for the idea. We shall point to four – the fourth being the one resulting from the human rights tradition. [9] They each give an account of human dignity, which, although in principle compatible with the definition proposed, determine a content the idea, which is characteristic of the worldview or framework in question, and which is not always compatible with the content as determined by other frameworks. It is clear from the context of the drafting of the Declaration that the idea of human dignity was understood to be surpassing this challenge without it thereby becoming a vacuous notion.[10] Our identification of human dignity as the fundamental value of the human being entitling it to respect is an attempt to render explicit what was implicit in this understanding: what it is that gives content to the idea, even when its metaphysical or ideological foundations are subtracted. As subtracted, the foundations might be described as follows:

A Cosmo-centric Framework locates human dignity in human nature and sees it to rely on this nature's objective, essential characteristics shared by all human beings, such as intelligence and freedom, which oblige them to self-respect and consequent virtuous behaviour. 'Nature' thus involves intelligible, goal-directed structures in individuals, which make them form a species.[11] The framework was predominant throughout antiquity, and still have – despite intellectual challenges – very wide popular appeal.

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[9] For a more detailed elaboration of these four frameworks, see Mette Lebech: *On the Problem of Human Dignity. A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation* (Wuerzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009), Part I. I there referred to the third framework as 'Logo-centric' but the designation 'Nomo-centric', which I give here, is in fact more accurate.

[10] Glendon, *A World Made New*, p. 147. She quotes Maritain for affirming that 'nations should and could reach practical agreement on basic principles of human rights without achieving a consensus on their foundations.' Johannes Morsink: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Origins, Drafting and Intent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) give an account of the drafting process which shows that it was that which was left because no one objected to it that ended up framing the agreement.

[11] Modern science, characteristically rejecting a goal-directed, teleological understanding of nature, particularly when assisted by the idea of natural evolution of species – which must in principle separate intelligible and biological species – tends to compromise the framework. On the other hand, as Morsink points out, the nature of human beings could also be appealed to as a reason for human rights by people defending an Enlightenment viewpoint, preferring this to a theological explanation (Morsink: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, p. 284-90.

A Christo-centric Framework understands human dignity to be founded in Christ's salvific action in Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption. Human dignity is, according to this framework, understood as a gift from God, which consists in Godlikeness (iconicity) and a mandate to rule over the rest of Creation.[12] The framework was predominant throughout the Middle Ages and well into Modernity and still has very significant support.

A Nomo-centric Framework sees human dignity as an achievement of civilisation, relying on the human being's ability to create and follow laws such that its behaviour is rule-governed through its autonomous rationality. Understanding the state as an achievement that relies on and makes manifest this ability, it cherishes the subject and everything subjective as originating and manifesting human dignity in and through the process of civilisation.[13] It was predominant throughout the period we refer to as 'Modernity' but is still very popular, especially among those committed politically or spiritually to the Enlightenment.[14]

In contrast with these, a Polis- or poly-centric Framework explains human dignity as a social construct, which through its indispensable support for freedom, justice, and peace in the world calls for its intersubjective constitution, integrating human interests and bringing former metaphysical or ideological frameworks to bear in support of a post-modern pluralism where frameworks co-exist. This framework is predominant today, in part due to the experience of significant state violence that spelled the demise of Modern optimism and faith in social progression which occasioned the drafting and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[15]

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[12] In so far as the framework incorporates a cosmo-centric understanding of nature, the framework tends to be compromised by the advance of modern science for the same reasons as the cosmo-centric framework does.

[13] Faced with state violence it becomes speechless, leaving room for older forms of justification of human dignity despite being critical of them.

[14] Morsink: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* Chapter 8 gives an insightful overview over how intermeshed these frameworks nevertheless is in practical argumentation.

[15] For the documentation of these frameworks, please see: Mette Lebech: *European Sources of Human Dignity. A Commented Anthology* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019).

That Stein's phenomenology methodologically precedes each of these in so far as they are metaphysical or ideological frameworks, and it, in contrast, is concerned with the *a priori* of experience as experienced, explains why Stein can, through her Christian faith, approach each of these as translatable into their elements, some of which she would adopt and some of which she would let go, in proportion to them contributing to the fullness (*Erfüllung*) of experience.[16]

2. The proposed definition

We have proposed to define human dignity as the fundamental value[17] of the human being entitling it to respect. By this we understand the expression 'human dignity' to be an abbreviation of the thereby expressed commitment that the value of the human being is fundamental, I.e., preferable to any other value and that it therefore cannot justifiably be subordinated to any of them, even if it may be justified by the fact that respect for it makes possible freedom, justice, and peace in the world. [18] 'Dignitas', in fact, was a translation of the Greek 'αξιωμα' throughout the Middle Ages and 'dignity' still retains its meaning as something 'of great consequence', a principle neither derived from nor instrumental to anything else. The

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[16] Edith Stein: *Finite and Eternal Being. An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, tr. By Kurt Reinhardt (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002).

[17] Edith Stein: *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2000). A value, to Stein, is first and foremost felt, in that positive values in the attitude that sees them and adopts them, deploys power (*Lebenskraft*). Values are objective in the sense that so long as the attitude appropriate to it is not fully experienced, the value also is not 'apprehended completely vividly' (p. 213). 'Inasmuch as values "induce" attitudes in us whose contents convey new propellant powers to our mental life, we have regarded them themselves as "life-contributing". That goes for all values without distinction, material and personal alike, regardless of whether they're realised or not.' (p. 213). A value is not only objective, therefore, but also ideal, in that it deploys its power irrespective of whether it is realised or not. Typically, a value can therefore *be realised*. Stein regards values to be organised in a hierarchy like Scheler does (See Lebech: *On the Problem of Human Dignity*, p. 270-74), brought about by the necessity to make a choice when incompatible motives claim my attention (Stein: *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, p. 55/ I, III, §4.) By 'fundamental' I therefore mean a value, which is not derived from any other, in fact preferred above all others, and rationally preferable to all other values.

[18] These three values are not thereby higher: they are high, however, and therefore they can explain what respect for human dignity is 'good for', what valuing human dignity achieves. Morsink: *The Declaration of Human Rights* puts it succinctly: 'human rights cannot serve as a means to anything unless they are first thought of as ends in themselves' (p. 284).

expression 'human dignity' in this way amounts to an affirmation that human beings have fundamental importance per definition. The upshot of the commitment is that it establishes, in so far as it is shared by many people, respect for human dignity as an intersubjectively constituted or socially constructed norm which underwrites the entitlement of human beings to recognition and respect and which flows directly from the personal and collective commitment. Habermas formulates it as follows: '*from the beginning: human dignity forms the "portal" through which the egalitarian and universalistic substance of morality is imported into law*. The idea of human dignity is the conceptual hinge that connects the *morality* of equal respect for everyone with positive *law* and democratic lawmaking in such a way that their interplay could give rise to a political order founded upon human rights.'[19]

Given its, in this way, socially constructed nature[20] human dignity can simultaneously be:

- The value of human beings to which I commit myself by regarding it as fundamental because it is the principle for successful human interaction (i.e., for freedom, justice, and peace in the world);

- *A moral principle* that can be violated by preferring other values to it;

- *A constitutional principle* according to which this value, when endorsed by government, is established as *the status of human beings* within this government's jurisdiction, such that the concerned jurisdiction's positive law therefore should realize and protect it;

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[19] Habermas: 'Human Dignity and the Realistic Utopia of Human Rights', 469.
[20] Stein did not use the terminology of 'social construction'. She did, however, understand intersubjective constitution to be a higher level of constitution, and to also concern values. See section 3 below and Mette Lebech: *A Phenomenology of Values. Edith Stein on Values, Motivation, and Belief* (Lanham: Lexington Books, forthcoming).

- A value that can be reaffirmed (as it has been by the human rights tradition) and restored (to its rightful place as a principle, as it is believed to be by God in Christ laying down His life *for us*).[21]

It is compatible:

- With human nature being the summit of the natural world and being like a resumé of it, a microcosm (Cosmo-centrism);

- With it being due to God's Creation, Incarnation and Redemption in Christ (Christo-centrism);

- With autonomous reason being human beings' reason for being *a priori* of ultimate importance (Nomo-centrism) and

- With it being in the interest of all human beings, no matter what worldview they hold (Polis- or poly-centrism).

3. The Constitution of Human Dignity

That human dignity is a value and a fundamental value, could be seen to form part, we have said, of what was agreed upon by the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such it is compatible with other frameworks' definition of human dignity, despite these having further characterisations of human dignity that places it within a metaphysical or ideological context and explains what human dignity 'consists in' or is 'due to'. Values, in contrast, are directly present to us within phenomenologically reduced experience as motivating powers, as

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[21] Mette Lebech and James McEvoy: '*Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem*. A Latin Liturgical Source Contributing to the Conceptualization History of Human Dignity' in *Maynooth Philosophical Papers*, 10/2020, pp. 117-133.

Stein sees it in continuation of both Husserl's, Reinach's and Scheler's thought.[22] Values were clearly and collectively recognised by the drafters, as they affirmed that respect for and recognition of human dignity were necessary for and in this way could motivate – individually and collectively – the bringing about of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

How exactly we identify human dignity, how we recognise it from within phenomenologically reduced experience and make it intelligible to ourselves and to others as such is what we want to look at in what remains of this article.[23]

a. The meaning of 'constitution'

The term 'constitution' is a phenomenological term referring to how we identify something (as something), i.e., to the mental acts in which this identification takes place. It is understood to be a function of the I through which identification takes place, designating the way in which an object is 'built up' and 'brought to appear' for us, by means of the acts that goes into constituting it.[24] 'It is a central theme of Edith Stein's Philosophy. […] which concerns the question of what makes an object into that which it is.'[25] Of the constitution of an object we can make a 'constitutional analysis,' i.e., a detailing of the acts that go into identifying it as well as of what motivates them, to see how it 'comes about' that we identify this thing. 'Constitution-analysis' is thus a way of handling phenomena by breaking them down into their intuitable elements, a procedure revealing the intelligibility of the thing by demonstrating how it is apprehended.

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[22] Mette Lebech: 'Motivation and Value' in *The Philosophy of Edith Stein. From Phenomenology to Metaphysics* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 27-40.

[23] Each of the following sections succinctly summarises Chapters 9-12 of Lebech: *The Constitution of Human Dignity*, which can be consulted for further details.

[24] Robert Sokolowski: *The Formation of Husserl's Concept of Constitution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970). Sokolowski points out how Husserl's concept of constitution matures over the years. Stein's understanding builds on Husserl's earlier concept, and she would arguably have had difficulties in adopting his later understanding of genetic constitution without further ado.

[25] Martin Hähnel: 'Konstitution' in *Edith Stein Lexikon*, ed. Marcus Knaup and Harald Seubert (Freiburg: Herder, 2017), p. 215.

b. The constitution the human being

The constitution of the 'other' happens, according to Husserl, on the back of objectivity: in my constitution of objectivity, I constitute the other.[26] The world, in so far as I regard it as objective, is thus always shared with others. The 'other' however, is not necessarily a human being: it can be an animal (e.g., a wolf) or any being of which I can become aware, who I experience to be experiencing (e.g., God or angels). The human being is the type of experiencing being, whose psycho-physical personal structure, like mine, is identified as 'human' because it possesses characteristic features (e.g., experiencing I, living body structure, feelings, sentience, soul, personhood, spirituality).[27]

c. The constitution of values

Values come to givenness for us (= we constitute them) from what 'happens inside us' when we constitute objects in the world: from our emotional response to these objects.[28] This response is double, however, mediated through the spirit as 'value feeling' on the one hand and through the psyche as 'emotion' on the other. I come to experience the discrepancy between psychic and spiritual apprehension of values when I, for example, 'feel like' doing something I know to be disvaluable.[29] Values thus motivate me directly as objective motivating factors into which I

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[26] Edmund Husserl: *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Transl. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), Fifth Meditation. 'Uncovering of the Sphere of Transcendental Being as Monadological Intersubjectivity,' pp. 89-150.

[27] Edith Stein: *Der Aufbau der Menschlichen Person. Vorlesung zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, ESGA 14 (Freiburg, Herder: 2004). ‚Aufbau' is a term used sometimes interchangeably by Husserl for constitution. It is mostly translated into English as 'structure,' emphasising its objective 'outcome.' Also Stein's early philosophy is concerned with the constitution of the human being.

[28] Stein: *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, pp. 160-66.

[29] The distinction of psyche from consciousness on the one hand and from spirit on the other is a specifically Steinian achievement. Both Husserl and Scheler understood, as Ingrid Vendrell Ferran points out in *Die Emotionen. Gefühle in der realistischen Phänomenologie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), p. 78, that ‚[p]sysisch ist [...] alles, was seinem Wesen nach ichzugehörig ist'. Stein, in contrast, understands the psyche to be constituted from all acts in which life power plays a role. It is therefore characteristic of a

can gain insight on the one hand (Stein refers to this as an 'empty grasp'[30]) and on the other hand through my emotions, the intensity of which may challenge clearheaded intuition. In so far as I act on values, I must prefer some value to others, and I thus place them in a hierarchy that is reflected in my personality, which changes along with my typical value response. Constituting a value does not by itself do something to my personality: but if I also prefer it by making it into a value I take to be mine, it contributes to the intelligibility of who I am.

d. The constitution of the fundamental value of the human being

Affirming human dignity means committing oneself (or the social entity one legitimately represents and on whose behalf one therefore acts) to preferring the value of the human being to all other values, understanding it to be of consequence for all other values and thus to be fundamental.

The reasons for the rationality of this commitment are as follows:

- The I as the pole of intentional experience is indispensable for the constitution of value. Its value is therefore fundamental since the condition for the experience of value must be as valuable as, or more valuable than, the experience of all values since there can be nothing valuable without it.

- The person constituted as founded on the I in so far as value and/or motivation is experienced is fundamental to the valuing activity constituted by the I as such. As there could be nothing valuable without it, the person shares with the I its conditionality for

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particular kind of I, namely one who experiences the fluctuation of lifepower as a causal mechanism in which its experiential life is framed.

[30] Stein: *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, p. 161.'This empty grasp thoroughly suffices in order to accept an object as a treasure in the knowing of it, to establish it conceptually, and to determine it unambiguously.

the experience of values and must be as valuable as, or more valuable than, the experience of all values taken together.

- The person of the other has in addition to the fundamental value of the person as such a value as a facilitator of my understanding or constitution of myself, but his or her value cannot be reduced to this value or founded on my value. He or she is indispensable to him- or herself and thus of a value preferable to all others.

- The type of the human being allows us to localise and recognise persons in the empirical world. Without it, the subject of value response would have no distinguishing features available for perception (as distinct from insight). The value of the type of the human being is higher than the additional value of the other, as it is fundamental to my identification of the other and myself as human beings. It is as high as or higher than the value of being able to identify myself as a human being, as I could not do this without identifying the type of the human being.

- In all of its aspects or elements, bodily, psychic, and spiritual, the human being is indispensable to its own experience, to the type of experience that is human. The human being, dependent on the type and on the other human being without which the type could not be identified, is thus dependent in its identity as a human being on both the type of the human being and on the other. The human being, the type and the other human being are thus equally necessary for the individual's identity as a human being. Their value is therefore at least as great as the value of the identity of the human being to itself, as great as the value of the I and of the person.

- The value of the human being can thus be traced back to the value of the I as identifiable, i.e., to the I of intersubjective, communal experience. It is therefore at least as valuable as this intersubjective, communal experience; the experience of the 'we'. The fundamental value of the I is thus transferred to the human being, recognised to make objectively manifest the indispensability of the I.

- The value we place on intersubjective experience is very high as it creates community, and its possibility founds meaningfulness. The value of intersubjective experience is not *per se* highest, as some experience is not derived from it, but it is indispensable for communication, meaning and communicable constitution. The value of the type of the human being founds the value of meaningfulness – without it (or some other type that I am), meaningfulness would cease to be valuable.

- The fact that the value of the human being is linked to the indispensability of the I for its own experience accounts for its fundamentality. Other values – all other values – can have value because of the valuing activity of the person founded on the I. This 'firstness' is what we designate as 'dignity', and when it is of the human kind, we call it 'human dignity'. Hence human dignity can be intuited as the fundamental value of the human being.

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that we with quasi-necessity come to have the idea that human beings have fundamental value, i.e. value that should not be subordinated to any other value, and that we commit ourselves to this idea whenever we use the expression 'human dignity'. We have also argued that this idea is recognizable in different metaphysical and ideological frameworks, even if each provides different accounts of what human dignity consists in. Stein's phenomenology allowed us to make a constitutional analysis of the widely shared intuition and equipped us to understand how we come to have the intuition and indeed to take it for granted. Whenever we do take human dignity for granted – which we frequently do in that we rely on it to be self-evident – human dignity functions as a status by reason of which human beings are entitled to recognition and respect. Being able to take human dignity for granted may not at first sight look like a significant cultural achievement. It is only be when we understand the dynamics

involved that we can come to appreciate that being able to take human dignity for granted is

something worth working at at all times.