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## THE CHALLENGES OF I-SPLITTING OR *ICHSPALTUNG* FOR THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF EDITH STEIN AND GERDA WALTHER

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The phenomenon of I-splitting or *Ichspaltung* poses many challenges for phenomenology. In particular, one wonders how one and the same I can perform different acts while preserving its disinterested autonomy and identity. Moreover, as the I moves from the natural attitude to the phenomenological one, phenomenologists like Husserl defend the purity of the transcendental I to grasp the sense of what its lives. How can the I move from one attitude to the next without being affected or conditioned by the acts carried out and content seized by the I in both attitudes? For example, one wonders how trauma or intense emotional experiences may affect the transcendental or phenomenological I, if at all. Edith Stein and Gerda Walther are read here as deepening the problem of I-splitting, for they introduce a form of it that is not merely defined by the undertaking of different acts of consciousness, for example, the move from the natural to the phenomenological attitude; rather, they describe lived experiences in which the very fundamental unity of the individual, personal I is challenged or negated through intense forms of sociality and intersubjectivity achieved in community and telepathy as well as ruptures in the constitutive unity of persons through soullessness. I argue here that these phenomena seriously challenge not only the unity of I experience but also phenomenology's claim of the capacity of a pure and absolute ego to grasp philosophically and scientifically the objective sense of its investigations.

*Keywords:* I-splitting, *Ichspaltung*, unity of consciousness, fragmentation of the I, identity, person and personhood, soullessness.

# ПРОБЛЕМА *ICHSPALTUNG* ИЛИ РАСЩЕПЛЕНИЯ Я ДЛЯ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИИ ЭДИТ ШТАЙН И ГЕРДЫ ВАЛЬТЕР

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Феномен расщепления Я или *Ichspaltung* ставит перед феноменологией множество задач. Например, можно задаться вопросом о том, как единое и неизменное Я может осуществлять разные акты, сохраняя при этом незаинтересованность, автономию и самоидентичность. Более того, из-за способности Я переходить от естественной установки к феноменологической, феноменологи гуссерлевского толка отстаивают чистоту трансцендентального Я, чтобы понять смысл того, что есть жизнь. Как Я может переходить из одной установки в другую, не будучи обусловленным или зависимым от актов и содержания, свойственных Я в обеих установках? Возникает вопрос, как травма или сильные эмоциональные переживания могут влиять на трансцендентальное или феноменологическое Я, — и могут ли в принципе. Прочтение Эдит Штайн и Герды Вальтер, предложенное в этой статье, основывается на том, что они углубляют проблему расщепления Я через введение его формы. Последняя определяется не только осуществлением различных актов сознания, как, например, переход от естественной установки к феноменологической. Штайн и Вальтер, скорее, описывают проживаемый опыт, в котором само фундаментальное единство личности или личностного Я отрицается или ставится под вопрос через привлечение форм социальности и intersubjectивности, достигнутых в сообществе, телепатии и разрывов в конститутивном единстве личностей из-за отсутствия духовности. Я утверждаю, что эти феномены представляют серьезную проблему не только для единства индивидуального опыта, но и для тезиса феноменологии о том, что чистое и абсолютное эго обладает способностью философски и научно постигать объективный смысл своих исследований.

*Ключевые слова:* расщепление Я, *Ichspaltung*, единство сознания, фрагментация Я, идентичность, личность и индивидуальность, бездуховность.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the principal contributions of phenomenology to philosophical understanding is undoubtedly its analysis and descriptions of first-person experience or the lived experience of the ego or the I. These rich studies have brought forward formidable research on the nature of the ego, its relation to and role in consciousness, self-consciousness, the sense of the self, and self-valuing. Edith Stein and Gerda Walther, two notable and important figures in the early phenomenological movement, wrote much about the life of the I, but their contributions have been largely understudied, mostly because what they say about the I is seen to be derivative from their respective teach-

ers, namely, Edmund Husserl and Alexander Pfänder. And while it is true that both students draw from their teachers, they also bring forward original insights in their respective discussions of the I, especially around the theme of ego- or I-splitting.

The phenomenon of I-splitting is discussed in both psychology and philosophy. Sigmund Freud presents numerous ideas about it and scholars continue to debate, for example, how much and why it may be understood as a defence mechanism for the ego<sup>1</sup>. Husserl describes I-splitting in the *Cartesian Meditations*:

We can describe the situation also on the following manner. If the Ego, as naturally immersed in the world, experiencingly and otherwise, is called “interested” in the world, then the phenomenologically altered and, as so altered, continually maintained attitude consists in a splitting of the Ego: in that the phenomenological Ego establishes himself as “disinterested onlooker,” above the naively interested Ego. That this takes place is then itself accessible by means of a new reflection, which, as transcendental, likewise demands the very same attitude of looking on “disinterestedly”—the Ego’s sole remaining interest being to see and to describe adequately what he sees, purely as seen, as what is seen and seen in such and such a manner. (Husserl, 1982, 35)

Husserl maintains that one form of egoic experience stands “above” another marked by different levels of interestedness or disinterestedness. Husserl scholars have studied I- or ego-splitting, especially as it relates to the I moving from one kind of intentional act to a different one, how it persists in picture representation as it moves from subject to object or one picture to another, as well as the question of the persistence of I as it relates to questions of personal identity<sup>2</sup>. One of the key problems introduced by the discussion of I-splitting centres around the possibility of the pure I of phenomenological investigation remaining capable of performing what it claims to do without being conditioned by history and nature. In other words, how can one really be sure that what the pure I purports to experience and analyse has not been conditioned by the events or prevailing ideologies of history or changes in one’s own physical nature or nature in general, thereby compromising the rigorous phenomenological science it presumes to undertake? Stein and Walther, following Husserl, wish to defend the capacity of the pure I to act as an unconditioned ground of phenomenological investigation. Stein, for example, writes:

The split may also come between an act that I do not reflect upon and a reflection that I direct toward it. Is then the I also “split”? Not in the strict sense. I—what is reflecting—do find myself—the thinking I—but it is the same I. It is no belated realization let alone a conclusion, since the former I and the latter I are the same. By reflecting I am

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<sup>1</sup> See (Bokanowski & Lewkowicz, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See (Bernet, 2002; Cavallaro, 2017; Cavallaro, 2019; Durt, 2020; Farges, 2015; Lohmar, 2012).

immediately conscious of myself as of what is thinking. Even where there is a number of simultaneous acts, in consciousness it is the same I that thinks, perceives, wills, etc.; there is no special I in each act. And the very same I that holds on to what has passed away and goes forth to meet what is to come is just as much the same I that from the past lives its way into the future. Thus phenomenally the I is something that has duration, something that not only is now but was and will be, even though the content of its actual being is constantly new and different. (Stein, 2009, 547–553)

Walther adds that the I, as it moves through different experiences, remains an *Ichzentrum* or I-centre (Walther, 1955, 36). But Stein's and Walther's account of a persisting I of consciousness and self-consciousness, which remains capable of delivering objective phenomenological analysis as it splits, is challenged by two fundamental results of their phenomenological investigations, namely, the idea of personhood or a person and forms of communal sociality or lived experiences of community. If we accept Stein's analysis of the unity of personhood as a fundamental defining quality of personhood—and the phenomenologist investigating phenomena is a person—her discussion of soullessness introduces a fundamental disruption in the sense of lived unity that marks personhood. It is this disruption that poses a problem for the idea of a pure I that is also personal, for a broken sense of personhood could have a deep effect on the purity of the phenomenological I and its capacity to split, which Stein wishes to defend. For Walther, her defence of radical experiences of intersubjective experience, in particular, her idea of fusional community, in which the I is taken up into a larger social reality of oneness, as well as her idea of telepathy in which one enters and lives the same experience of the other, not as a presentification, but *also* as the same I, means that one's own ego becomes identical, at least temporarily, with another's. One's ego identifies with the other's, albeit momentarily, and in so doing one questions whether such intense forms of intersubjective experience, which extend beyond any claims of what empathy could do, transcend what traditional ego-splitting is supposed to achieve: fusional community and intersubjectivity seem, at least momentarily, to bracket (perhaps negate?) the individuality of the I as well as its ability to split and maintain the distance and distinctions between Is in the forms of sociality Walther discusses. Phenomenologically speaking, Stein and Walther help us explore points at which ego-splitting becomes challenging and questionable, both in terms of the phenomenology of the person and sociality. The inability of the I to split announced by both philosophers, then, may be read as challenging not only the purity of the phenomenological I, its absoluteness, but also the very constitutive unity of both personhood and personal intersubjectivity. The I's inability to split and take up the position of the phenomenological, disinterested observer creates a significant la-

cuna in the phenomenological method itself, for the very function of the subjective base of an absolute, pure ego is hindered as the I is not able to perform the necessary unconditioned split to launch and execute the gaze of the phenomenological I and its necessary reductions.

## 2. EDITH STEIN ON I-EXPERIENCE

The discussion of varied lived experiences of the I can be found throughout Edith Stein's philosophical corpus. In *On the Problem of Empathy*, Stein takes up the Husserlian discussion of the pure I as a zero point of orientation (Stein, 1989, 38–39), and in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, the I or the ego is revealed to play important roles in the constitution of both psychic and spiritual life (Stein, 2000, 12–15). In the former, the I is, among other things, the seat of affective and sensual bodily experience, whereas in the latter, the I is also understood as the locus of motivated and freely willed acts, the bearer of a personal core or personality, and the agent of rational and categorial acts. Stein also distinguishes between the I and the self in *The Structure of the Human Person* (Stein, 2004, 66–67), and in her last major philosophical work, *Finite and Eternal Being*, I-experience, like the Augustinian ego, serves as indubitable and apodictic evidence of a subject's existence: it lives (Stein, 2002, 48–60). The pure I, as it moves from act to act of consciousness, remains the self-same I. It is capable of splitting, and it would be "fictive" to think that two different Is coexist (Stein, 2000, 264). Stein says to think that this is not the identical I living different experiences contradicts what is immediately graspable about conscious experience. It would be impossible within the limits of this article to chronicle all the nuances and advances of Stein's rich phenomenological analysis of I-experience; rather, I propose to look at a particular phenomenon, namely, the possibility of soullessness or experiencing oneself as having no or a diminished psyche, which could potentially manifest itself as experiencing oneself without the I of psyche or, at least, experiencing its diminishment. Stein never directly discusses in great detail the phenomenon of a diminished I, but one of the possibilities we can infer from her discussion of soullessness, is a weakened or diminished I of psyche that does not appear, individuate, or reveal itself in phenomenological experience. In fact, the I of the soul or the psyche might be displaced from its centrality or repressed, for the soul is occluded or displaced, perhaps even absent.

What is the psyche for Stein? In *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, the psyche or soul is understood as a layer of the human person. It is described as depth and is a seat of affect, emotion, sensation, drives, impulses, and largely moves in

an action-reaction or cause and effect fashion. The I-experience of the soul is distinguished from the pure I of phenomenological experience. Lived experiences of psyche, for example, an emotion, are accompanied by a sense of mineness that bespeaks a psychic I-experience. Stein remarks,

We take the soul to be a substantial unity which, entirely analogous to the physical thing, is made up of categorical elements and the sequence of categories. Its elements appear as individual instances of these categories, and the soul forms a parallel to the sequence of experiential categories. Among these categorical elements there are some that point beyond the isolated soul to connections with other psychic as well as physical unities, to impressions which the soul makes and suffers. "Causality" and "changeability" are also among the psychic categories. This substantial unity is "my" soul when the experiences in which it is apparent are "my" experiences or acts in which my pure "I" lives. The peculiar structure of psychic unity depends on the peculiar content of the stream of experience; and, conversely, (as we must say after the soul has been constituted for us) the content of the stream of experience depends on the structure of the soul. Were there streams of consciousness alike in content, there would also be souls of the same kind or instances of ideally-the-same soul. However, we do not have the complete psychic phenomenon (nor the psychic individual) when we examine it in isolation. (Stein, 1989, 40)

Then pure I lives in the soul, it can experience and grasp the essence of the soul, but it is not reducible to it. Furthermore, the I of psyche is described as having depths too, echoing the idea of the soul as depth (Stein, 2000, 95). For example, sensory stimuli can produce certain lingering feelings in an individual. Psyche is thoroughly intertwined with the lived body and has deep connections with spirit. Psyche helps the body recognise that is undergoing certain sense (five senses) and sensory (for example, pleasure, ease, dis-ease, and pain) experiences. By contrast, in motivating acts, certain affective states or emotions may cause one to become aware that one has a freedom to respond willingly to possibilities initially announced through an emotional experience (Stein, 2000, 95–96). For example, I suddenly feel anger, but my anger also makes me aware that I can choose how to respond to a certain person's words or deeds. My actions could be motivated by a rational stance I take towards that person after deliberation and after the initial feeling of anger. Psyche is also where one feels the strength or weakness of the life force. Furthermore, psyche is an important constitutive layer of human personhood. It serves as an important bridge between the lived bodily and spiritual layers of human personhood. The life of psyche is carried or born by the I of psyche. One can have first-person experiences of one's own psyche as well as that of others through empathy and other forms of intersubjective experience, for example, the socialities of society and/or community.

Given the foregoing brief description of psyche, what would it mean to be soulless? Stein distinguishes being full of soul from lacking soul. She writes:

This switching off of your soul is an arbitrary one. Its counterpart is a pervasive rigidity of your soul against all endeavors, a running dry of its life. The ego descends into its depths, it holes up there. Yet the ego meets up with a gaping void in there. The ego gets the feeling that it's missing its soul, that it's only a shadow of itself detached from its ownmost being. (This kind of "soullessness" is plainly to be distinguished from that of somebody not yet awakened to soul life who imagines that the entire abundance that life has to offer is already his or hers.) The situation at first seems to be completely incomprehensible. You ask yourself: What exactly is missing and what have I got on hand? Because the soul that you lost, you still have right there in its total distinctiveness—maybe you just don't remember that you used to possess something. (Stein, 2000, 234)

Though the soulless remains an individual, the quality of the inner life suffers from a deficit of soul. The depth that marks the being of the soul may never come to exist or it may be eliminated or diminished. How?

Stein identifies five possibilities (Stein, 2000, 234–240). First, the soul may never have been awoken. Second, one may find oneself moved from the depths to the periphery of the soul, and she even suggests that one may choose or be forced to stay in a "crowded periphery." Third, one may find oneself lost and in the middle of an ego of psyche dwelling in nothing, a kind of nihilism of sorts. Fourth, there may be some emotional cause, for example, feeling embittered may cut oneself off from experiencing the depths of the soul. Finally, a blow of fate or a trauma can cause the being of the soul to not appear, disappear, or be experienced in a very diminished form. One may be conscious or not of feeling soulless. Stein's discussion of being soulless raises a dilemma for her phenomenology. On one hand, her phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy, from beginning to end, maintain the tri-partite structure of the human person as a union of body, soul, and spirit. In the aforementioned discussion, Stein ponders the possibility that this personal structure may be broken or incomplete. The implication for the concept of personhood is clear: scholars who maintain that the Steinian person is an essential and, therefore, necessary human structure that belongs to all human beings will have to account for the possibility of soulless individuals who somehow remain persons though they may be soulless.

In Stein's discussion of soullessness, two important distinctions are made. The soul is not identical with the ego or I of psyche, and the ego, though diminished, does not completely disappear, nor is it displaced in communal fusion—a possibility that certainly arises in Gerda Walther's philosophy. But in the experience of soullessness, the I is aware that something or a part of itself is missing or lacking. It is this lack

that could be read as a kind of I-splitting: the I is split between a fuller and lesser experience of itself. Stein notes that in soulful experience, what the I lives can be more intensely present, vibrant, and fulfilling. Without the soul, the I experiences itself and life with diminished intensity and force.

In order to illuminate the matter, we've got to make clear for ourselves what is meant by this: to live from out of your soul. It means that life in action not only reflects the qualities of your soul, but also pours out your soul and is its life. [...] Your soul itself is a source of life. If your soul is awake, then these new powers are flowing to the mental life, and it's as if the world rises up brand new in front of the individual experiencing [this]. If the individual isn't living out of the depths, out of his soul, then these powers for his life get lost. And now it can also happen that your soul, without getting switched off, stops generating life. The source hidden in your soul can sputter out. The world still comes crashing in upon it, but your soul cannot "light up" inside. It has no "response" anymore. The susceptibility for values breaks down, although they can still be recognized. The "static qualities" also seem to have vanished: kindness no longer radiates in positive sentiments and kindly actions, and the interior seems emptied of everything that used to fill it, everything in which the individuality, itself ineffable, used to articulate itself. Such a breach in the life of a person can occur if a "stroke of fate" uses up all the powers of her soul. A person can also gradually shrivel up through constant excessive expenditure of power, and she's got to have new powers supplied to her from an extraneous source so that she rouses again to new life. (Stein, 2000, 235)

Stein notes that the experience of soullessness results in the inability of the personal core or personality, understood as a centre, to actualise itself, to impress itself on the life of the person: the personality core may be present, but it lies unrealized and stagnant. Likewise, the soul itself cannot grow from within as it remains largely influenceable from the outside, but not from within.

Generally, where your soul is disconnected from the actuality of living, what's missing from behavior and from the visible being of the individual is the individual flair or, as we also say, the "personal touch." If the behavior itself survives in its personal style and, viewed superficially, retains its distinctiveness, still that distinctiveness bears the stamp of artificiality. The individual's life becomes driven by sensory powers and perhaps by volition, or even carried along by the powers of someone else's soul. The individual's living isn't coming out of the center of his or her own being, and therefore it is lacking the originality and authenticity of "core-valent" living. We can think to ourselves of individuals who are altogether missing their own center of their being, and together with it a genuine personality and (qualitative) individuality. With the human being, in all instances of "soul-less" behavior you'll be permitted only to say that he didn't find or temporarily "lost himself," for as long as his individuality is unrecognizable (insofar as the limit case of an "absolutely" soul-less behavior can be conceived as realized at all and it isn't merely a question of more or less). In principle he has such a center, which can burst forth at any time. On the other hand, you've got to say that soul and individuality (or personal distinctiveness anyway) cohere only with soul essence. (Stein 2000, 235–236).



Stein's phenomenology described the essence of personhood as a lived unity of body, psyche, and spirit as well as one being marked by a personality. The pure I, which is understood as a unique aspect of consciousness and the core of phenomenological inquiry, is described as absolute and unconditioned. The pure I, on Stein's account, can grasp the essence of the soul and the specific type of I experience that dwells within it as well as what it would mean to be soulless. The pure I also grasps what it is to be a person. Following Husserl, Stein shows that the pure I can split to capture the different acts and content it experiences and examines. The pure I remains impervious, so it seems, to the aforementioned vicissitudes of the life of the soul and its I-experiences. As the soul struggles with its own awareness of its soullessness, as described by Stein above, the I of psyche too becomes aware of an inner tension between varying layers of the person that struggles but fails to actualise themselves. The I of psyche is deeply affected by the conflict and failures to actualise itself, especially in its relations to body and spirit.

### 3. GERDA WALTHER AND THE EXPERIENCE OF I-NESS AND ICHSPALTUNG

Gerda Walther was deeply interested in the relation between phenomenology and psychology. Her teacher, Alexander Pfänder, produced monumental studies of the phenomenology of psyche, including his famous work on willing (Pfänder, 1967). She was influenced by his approach and insights. I wish to focus here on two major treatments of the I found in Walther's treatment of communal and telepathic experience. Central to both of these phenomena is an understanding of the human person and its constituent layers. Like Stein, Walther defends the claim that human beings are structured as persons, and what defines them is the fact that they are constituted of intertwining layers of lived body, psyche, and spirit. In *Phenomenology of Mysticism*, following Pfänder, Walther argues that our fundamental essence (*Grundwesen*) is our configuration as persons. The role of the I appears in all three constitutive levels of human persons, but the I here is not to be understood as the pure I. Like Stein and Husserl, the pure I or *Ichzentrum* is distinguished from the foregoing description of the ego operating in the three realms of the person; the I-centre is a unique feature of consciousness and phenomenological investigation.

Walther chronicles two important cases of *Ichspaltung*, namely, in the intense and intimate experience of fusional community and in telepathy. In her work on the social ontology of communities, Walther claims that the most intense form of human community is one of fusion or inner oneness (Walther, 1923, 99–100), in which in-

dividuals fuse as one in and through a certain intense experience of community, for example, the deep solidarity of a political community (Walther, 1923, 97–98). Persons remain immersed in history, culture, and may belong to a people, a state, a union, etc. She describes two psychic aspects of the inner oneness of communities, namely, feeling/affect and habit. One can experience a feeling of oneness, of belonging to one community. She describes it as “[a] warm, affirming emotional wave of greater or lesser force suddenly flooding, more or less abruptly and violently or quietly and mildly, the whole subject or only a very ‘thin’ part of the subject” (Walther, 1923, 34). The subject experiencing the feeling of oneness is an I that feels itself bound to the object-oneness (*Einigungsobjekt*) of community in a forceful, warm and intensive stream of feelings (Walther, 1923, 35). Walther notes that the feeling of oneness usually emerges from the background and not directly from the I itself, suggesting that I is overwhelmed or overcome by a feeling of oneness (Walther, 1923, 35). The I does not produce the feeling, but undergoes it. Walther says that the I “has nothing to do with” (Walther, 1923, 36) the feeling itself. There is a passivity of being overwhelmed by the feeling of the lived experience of community. Walther notes that though one can experience being taken up in the feeling of oneness, she cautions us not to think that this feeling arises out of nowhere and that it comes about all of a sudden *stricto sensu*. In fact, in all probability, the feeling of oneness grew over time: she describes a *Zusammenwachsen* (Walther, 1923, 36) or a growth of the feeling of oneness over time that is both unconscious or minimally or less conscious (*unterbewußt*) (Walther, 1923, 36–37)<sup>3</sup>.

Habitual forms of oneness are distinguished from unconscious or less conscious forms of oneness by virtue of memory (Walther, 1923, 37). According to Walther, in the case of the latter, one cannot presentify the role of the acting I and its role in experiencing oneness, whereas in the case of the former, the acting I can be presentified as remembering a habitual action in which it was present and in which it experienced a habitual feeling of oneness. But does this mean that experiences of oneness to which we are habituated are simply remembered lived experiences or memories? Walther distinguishes habits from remembered feelings of oneness by arguing that in memory one can observe that the I of the remembering person and the I of the remembered

<sup>3</sup> Walther remarks, „Zur Einigung im weitesten Sinne können wir aber doch jedenfalls dies unbeeußte, unterbeeußte Zusammenwachsen rechnen, es ist dann gleichsam ein Keimzelle, wenn auch nicht der notwendige Ausgangspunkt, aller anderen Einigung und Gemeinschaft. Bei ihm spielt das Ich, wie wir sahen, überhaupt keine Rolle, sei es aktiv oder passiv. Von einer Einigung im engeren Sinne kann man aber wohl erst sprechen, wo es sich um ein aktuelles Ich-Erlebnis handelt, das dann allerdings in ein habituelles Erlebnis übergehen kann” (Walther, 1923, 38).

feeling of oneness are not always identically the same: they are separated by time and space. In habit, one always returns to the same, identical I<sup>4</sup>. Habits of feeling of oneness are important for community: they help keep communities together, but the habitual feeling of oneness need not be marked by the full presence of the I, as is the case with fully intentional and meaningful forms of community (Caminada, 2014; Schmid, 2012, 135). In both lived experiences of community, either the one that one lives fully aware and intensely as a moment of a now or one of habit, the I undergoes modifications of itself. The I becomes one with others in the fusional community and it is not always present in habit as it would be in a now or present experience of community.

In the intense form of community described by Walther, the I-center can grasp the intense unification of consciousnesses of the group, but it still remains distinct from it. In order to do so, there has to be an I-splitting that allows the investigator to grasp the different moments, contents, and specificity of the acts involved in the phenomenon while grasping the intensity of the lived experience of community. Likewise, in telepathy, the I-center is still present, but one simultaneously lives the same experience as the other does. In telepathy, one is cognizant that one is living the experience of the other. The I splits to share and phenomenologically grasp the same identical experience of another I while still experiencing the identification with the other. It should be remarked here that the experience of the other I is not one of observation: one does not simply watch the experience of the other I from within the ego-life of the other; rather, one undergoes the same experience as the other I—one intimately lives the experience of the other I as the other lives it. Marina Pia Pellegrino notes, citing Walther:

[Walther] maintains that telepathy is unique because the living of the experience is carried out from the viewpoint of the other, at the very same time that the other lives it, as if one were present in the same place with the other, as if we were remembering it. “Simultaneously, in a clear representation, for example, in a dream, we see the interior of something. I see what L, in this exact moment, experiences. I ‘see’ L in his room [noticed by me] lying on his couch, and I see him as he sees himself: I experience him lying on the sofa, not as one observing him lying on the sofa, but as L lying on the sofa [...] I also see that he has a book in his hand that has slid down onto the sofa, a book that he no longer

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<sup>4</sup> Walther notes: „So unterscheidet die habituell gewordene aktuelle Einigung sich von der erinnerten Einigung durch die Stellung zum Erlebnisquellpunkt — hier im Gefühlszentrum —, während es mit ihr die gleiche Stellung zum Ich-Punkt hat, — der ja sowohl im erinnerten, als auch im habituellen Erlebnis früher lebendig gelebt hat, aber mit dem wesentlichen Unterschied, daß es beim habituellen Erlebnis wieder dasselbe identische Erlebnis durchleben kann, während dies beim erloschenen, erinnerten Erlebnis wesensnotwendig ein-für-allemal ausgeschlossen ist. Andererseits unterscheidet sich die habituell gewordene aktuelle Einigung vom bloßen Zusammenwachsen durch die Stellung zum Ich, während es mit ihm die gleiche Stellung zum Erlebnisquellpunkt hat” (Walther, 1923, 43).

reads. Furthermore, I also grasp that he is smoking; I ‘smell’ and ‘savor’ in my interior the scent of his cigarette and I am stimulated to smoke.” (Pellegrino, 2018, 18–19)

Not only can the I break out of its own sphere of ownness or I-realm, it can enter into the I-sphere of another and simultaneously experience what the other is experiencing. For example, Walther records her smelling the same smoke of the other. Here, the possibility of identical experience being lived by two Is, but in order to do so, one I needs to split from its own interiority to permit the other’s I experience to enter. From the vantage point of the I undergoing the telepathic experience, the experiencer simultaneously lives the experience of two distinct and discrete Is. Here you have two distinct I-experiences, namely, the I that lives the telepathic act and the I of the phenomenologist observing and studying the phenomenon. Maria Pellegrino eloquently observes about the I:

Walther sketches a description of the I that is different from the usual one in which the I is conceived as simply tending to something. The I is capable of lifting itself out of its own lived experiences in an act of reflection („*sich über seine Erlebnisse zu erheben*”). Simply being “conscious of” does not in itself guarantee the freedom of the I. Although the I may know its lived experiences, it can also freely choose to abandon itself to living the very flow of the experiences. This moment of the force of the will, which implies self-consciousness but is not reducible to it, is a sign of freedom proper to human beings alone. Here, we also can establish the difference between the purely psychic and spiritual aspects of human beings. (Pellegrino, 2018, 15–16)

Let us pause here to consider the exact nature of the I-splitting described in Stein and Walther’s analyses. Stein, in her analysis of soullessness, claims that the I can experience itself in psychic terms, as having diminished soul or life force. She also notes how this loss of soul colours one’s personhood or personal core, one’s personal “touch.” These are all inner experiences. Simultaneously, as this loss plays itself out, Stein is aware that the unity that marks the person, as person, is compromised. The phenomenological I is able to experience and grasp the sense of what it is to be a person, as a fully constituted unity, and what it means to have that personhood broken or diminished. The I splits and is able to perceive simultaneously both the fullness and lack (of psyche) of personhood. Like Husserl’s I that can move from the natural to the phenomenological attitude, the I is able to grasp the senses of a fully constituted object, namely, the person, and the fragmentation and, therefore, incompleteness, of this very object. The personal I, which underlies all phenomenological investigation, can experience itself as a fully constituted object and as a soulless one. The exact nature of the split, in this case, is localised in the personal unity presupposed to carry out phenomenological investigation, for it is a person who undertakes it, who, though soul-

less and suffering disunity, can still understand the necessity of personal unity. Two acts are occurring: one that helps grasp a fully constituted object and the other that grasps what is absent, that can anticipate or even imagine what ought to be present, the one that grasps the phenomenon of soullessness: the absence and fullness of the phenomenological and personal I are grasped in one and the same moment. In order to see these two realities, the I splits apart its very own personal unity.

In the two social phenomena Walther describes, namely, community and telepathy, the I either fuses or unifies with others to have an intense form of community or one lives the very same lived experience of the other, as the other lives it, for example, tasting the smoke of the other. The nature of the split in Walther's case revolves around the I moving from its own, individual experience of itself, from its sphere of ownness (*Eigenheitssphäre*) to a group or collective experience. In telepathy, one shifts from an I act of perception to a unique intersubjective one. In community, consciousness shifts from an I consciousness to an intense we-consciousness. I is both I and we; it can split from the singular to the plural and vice versa.

#### 4. CHALLENGES POSED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ICHSPALTUNG?

Both Walther and Stein maintain that we are capable of I-splitting in order to grasp phenomena like the person, soullessness, intense community, and telepathy. The pure I or the orientational I-centre make this possible. Yet, both philosophers describe unique phenomena that raise questions about the absoluteness or purity of the I to guarantee the objectivity of what it experiences and analyzes. In other words, cannot the brokenness or non-development of the unity that marks personhood, the lived experience of community sociality, and telepathy, because they are such intense experiences, condition what the pure I or I-center grasps? Can the pure I fully and absolutely resist not being affected by ruptures in our personhood, and forceful ego identifications with others? Obviously, Stein and Walther maintain this is possible, for how else could we grasp the very phenomena we undergo? I-splitting allows us to observe both interestedly and disinterestedly these phenomena, as Husserl astutely observes.

In a deep sense, I-splitting allows us to experience and see the objective reality of phenomena, for example, one can fully know and understand that one suffers from a diminishment of one's soul as one lives it in one's personal individuation. One can access how such experiences unfold and are lived. Likewise, one can understand what it means to fuse with others in intense experiences of community or telepathy. But the absoluteness or purity of the possibility of such experiences must also be called into

question. There are times when the unity and unique personalities that mark personhood are so thoroughly dominated, either by violence or ideology, that I-splitting becomes either very limited or impossible. There are times when an idea or concept of personhood becomes burdensome to an individual, for the essential descriptions are taken up and deployed by science to affect social and political reality. The results of phenomenological science ultimately move back into the world and have real consequences, as Roberto Esposito chronicles in his work (Esposito, 2018, 183). He shows how the phenomenology of the person, especially in Edith Stein, may inevitably lead to the justification of a metaphysical abstract conception of personhood that cannot resist dominant legal and historical ideas of personhood rooted in property ownership, which ultimately are used to justify slavery and colonisation by property owners. There are also times when community and intersubjective experiences are so overwhelming that the pure I or I-center merely echoes or repeats what overwhelms it, with no critical eye: the splitting between acts of the pure I or I center becomes indistinguishable from other I-acts and -experiences conditioned by intense internal and external circumstances. This is certainly the case in the history of philosophy itself. Decolonial scholars, for example, Walter D. Mignolo and Sylvia Wynter, have chronicled the effects of Enlightenment philosophies, including phenomenology, in enforcing colonising violence on Indigenous peoples (Mignolo, 2011; Wynter, 2003). The discourses of science, reason, personhood, human and animal nature, gender, justice, and property ownership have been shown to be constituted or tinged with essential nefarious prejudices that do not allow the pure I to see its own colonising social and political power. Perhaps, we must temper the discussion of the absoluteness or purity of the I to guarantee objectivity, and perhaps we need to do so outside of the epistemological discussions of verification, error, and correction of phenomenological descriptions. Stein's and Walther's discussion of personhood and soullessness, community, and telepathy announce a possibility that the foundational aspect of I-splitting of the pure I or I-center may have to be tempered: it is not that the pure I can constantly correct and verify its own positions and lived experiences, but that it may, at times, be utterly incapable of seizing and experiencing the fullness of that which it purports to experience, describe, and analyze, for it cannot always and everywhere maintain the absoluteness of the purity and unity of the phenomenological and personal I. In this sense, phenomenology must rethink its claim to be a foundational philosophy or science. It needs to be mindful of its own limits, and it must know when it can and cannot speak.

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