

Seminar

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*Sociality of Suffering and Intersubjectivity in Perception:
Relationality, Non-Choice and Autonomy
in Parental Live Organ Donation*

Thursday, 12 December, 4:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
www.swedishcollegium.se



ABOUT KRISTIN ZEILER

Kristin Zeiler received a Ph.D. from Linköping University in 2005 with the thesis “Chosen Children? An empirical and philosophical analysis of moral aspects of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis and germ-line gene therapy”. She has been Ethics Fellow at Cardiff University and a postdoctoral researcher at the World Health Organization, Geneva.

In her research, Zeiler combines analytic moral philosophy with a phenomenology of the body. Several of her projects also combine narrative and philosophical analyses. Her research has examined philosophical and ethical aspects of organ donation, the use of reproduction technologies, sex assignment and surgery on children born with intersex anatomies, and relational autonomy and intercorporeality in dementia care. Zeiler’s publications include: “A Phenomenology of Excorporation, Bodily Alienation and Resistance” in *Hypatia* (2013); “Learning to Attend to the Suffering Other: Virtue Ethics and Phenomenology of the Body in Medical Ethics Education” in *Reconceiving Medical Ethics* (ed. Cowley, Continuum Publications, 2012); and “Deadly Pluralism? Why Death Concept, Death Definition, Death Criterion and Death Test Pluralism Should Be Allowed, Even Though It Evokes Some Problems” in *Bioethics* (2009).

Zeiler is the principal investigator of the research project “An Ethics of Bodily Giving and Sharing in Medicine” and will work on this project during her stay at SCAS. The project examines ethical reasoning in different practices of bodily giving (e.g. organ, tissue, egg, sperm donation, and surrogate motherhood) in medicine. It highlights tensions in conceptions about giving, sharing, altruism, autonomy, and exploitation and investigates these concepts in a systematic manner with the aim of elaborating an ethics of bodily giving in medicine.

ABSTRACT

Parents who donate as live organ donors to their ill children often describe the donation in non-choice terms, i.e. as the only alternative in the light of the child’s suffering or risk of near death, and medical professionals and medical ethicists debate whether donation experienced as non-choice should be seen as indicating lack of autonomy or be expressive of it. This presentation contributes to on-going discussion of relationality in decision-making by examining the role of embodiment and the temporal dimension of self-other relations for choice and action within the context of parental live liver donation. By engaging with phenomenology of the body, I want to discuss how bodily expressions of pain, fear, and anxiety may unfold in the shared space between parent and child with end stage liver disease and feed into both of their lived bodies, shape their perceptions of the situation including their possibilities for action and make some alternatives stand forth as for them, in this situation, and this in a way that is informed by their unique bodily style of being-together. The article presents a line of reasoning that allows us to acknowledge parents’ descriptions of donation in non-choice terms and yet understand their donations as expressive of their autonomy. It brings reasoning from within the philosophical perspective of phenomenology of the body into dialogue with autonomy literature.