

Gerda Walther on community and unification

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Today

1. Walther's investigation of the essence of social communities
2. The theory of inner unification

Gerda Walther

- Born in 1897 and died in 1977
- Strongly interested in Marxism in her youth.
- Enrolled at the university in Munich to pursue a political career.
- The influences of Alexander Pfänder and Edmund Husserl changed her path.
- Spent six semesters in Freiburg (1917-1921), and interacted with Husserl, Stein, Heidegger, etc.
- Walther's doctoral dissertation: *Ein Beitrag zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften* (defended in 1921, published two years later)
- Strong interest in mysticism, from around 1918.
- *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik* (1923).



1. Walther's investigation of the essence of social communities

- What is the essence of social communities?
- The topic of community was not new at that time.
- Scheler's discussion of the distinction between life-community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*) (Scheler 1973).
- Communal experiences in Stein.
- One important source of the phenomenologists' work on community was a book by Ferdinand Tönnies entitled *Community and Society*.

Scheler on life-community and society

Life-community	Society
Natural and organic	Artificial
Tied to a place and with a persisting duration	Not tied to a place, and focused on the present
Based on a spontaneous living-with-one-another	Based on agreements and contracts
Trust	Distrust
Co-responsibility	Self-responsibility

Tönnies on community and society



- Community and society are species of unions (*Verbindungen*) (Tönnies 2001, p. 17).
- In unions, people relate to one other in reciprocal relations that tend toward preservation (instead of destruction).
- But community and society are markedly different forms of human organization.
 - Community is characterized by tradition, organic growth, and solidarity.
 - Society by ephemeral transactions, a mechanistic organization, and strategic calculation.
- Community's "natural will" (*Wesenwille*) \neq society's "rational will" (*Kürwille*)

"All kinds of social co-existence that are familiar [*vertraute*], comfortable [*heimliche*) and exclusive are to be understood as belonging to community [*Gemeinschaft*]. Society [*Gesellschaft*] means life in the public sphere, in the outside world. In community we are united from the moment of our birth with our own folk for better or for worse. We go out into society as if into a foreign land" (Tönnies 2001, p. 18).

Community

- Traditional bonds and the paradigmatic example of the domestic community:
 - “domestic *community* with its infinite effects upon the human soul will be understood intuitively by anyone who has ever experienced it” (2001, p. 18).
- Being brought up and socialized in a certain family means being shaped by its habits and traditions.
- These traditions are not reducible to what each member does in isolation from the others.
- Community is not an aggregate of self-standing, independent individuals. It has a holistic character:
 - “the whole is not merely the sum of its parts; on the contrary, the parts are dependent on and conditioned by the whole, so that the whole itself possesses intrinsic reality and substance” (2001, p. 21)
- Communities grow, develop, and eventually also die like biological organisms:
 - “Community must be understood as a living organism in its own right [...]” (2001, p. 19).
- Members care for the communal life and for one another in a non-instrumental way.

- Community of blood (*Gemeinschaft des Blutes*), community of place (*Gemeinschaft des Ortes*), community of spirit (*Gemeinschaft des Geistes*).
 - "Community by *blood*, indicating primal unity of existence, develops more specifically into community of *place*, which is expressed first of all as living in close proximity to one another. This in turn becomes community of *spirit*, working together for the same end and purpose." (2001, p. 27)
- The primacy of the community of blood (eg., 2001, p. 34) and the risk of a biological essentialism.
 - The notion of community was co-opted by Nazi ideologists in the 1930's (cf. *Volksgemeinschaft*).
 - Tönnies was strongly opposed to the Nazi ideology (and was for this reason deprived of his professorship and pension).
- An undercurrent in Tönnies' discussion: the roles of mutual understanding (*Verständnis*) and language as binding factors of communal life.
 - "Reciprocal binding sentiment [*verbindende Gesinnung*] as the peculiar will of a community is what we shall call mutual understanding [*Verständnis*] (consensus). This is the special social force and fellow feeling [*Sympathie*] that holds people together as members of a whole. [...] The true organ of mutual understanding, its means of development, is language itself." (2001, p. 33)

Society

- Ephemeral transactions and the paradigmatic figure of the merchant:
 - “[the merchant] stands isolated as far as possible from all constraining connections, duties or prejudices. [...] He is free from the ties of community life, and the freer he is, the better it is for him.” (2001, p. 68)
- In society, individuals enter into transactional relations without reference to an overarching whole to which they belong:
 - “Nothing happens in society that is more important for the individual’s wider group than it is for himself. On the contrary, everyone is out for himself alone and living in a state of tension against everyone else.” (2001, p. 52)
 - “Nobody wants to do anything for anyone else, nobody wants to yield or give anything unless he gets something in return that he regards as at least an *equal* trade-off.” (2001, p. 52)
- The holistic character of community ≠ the atomistic character of society. However, no *bellum omnium contra omnes*:
 - There is boundless competition in society, but also strategic coalitions.
 - Individuals in society are each on their own, but they rely on some *common ground* to secure the success of their exchanges:
 - In “the simple act of giving and receiving an object [...] contact takes place and *common ground* [*gemeinsames Gebietes*] emerges which is sought by both parties. This lasts as long as the time taken for the “transaction”, which can be almost no time at all or can be envisaged as extending for as long as you like.” (2001, p. 53)
 - Societal common ground (which only facilitates transactions between individuals who are driven by their personal interests) ≠ the communal binding sentiment and mutual understanding.

Why does the distinction matter?

- Tönnies as an early critic of capitalism, globalization, cosmopolitanism.
- The distinction is supposed to help in understanding the “fundamental problems of social life” (Tönnies 2001, p. 3).
- How exactly? Some possibilities: *taxonomic* value, *explanatory* value, *historical* value.
- 1st edition of the book: the value of the distinction is not primarily taxonomic, or explanatory, but historical:
 - Two stages of Western civilization:
 - “we have two contrasting epochs in the grand overall development of civilization: an epoch of market-based civil Society follows an epoch of close-knit Community.” (2001, p. 257).
 - And two stages of individual human development:
 - We are born into the community of a family, and only later “go out into society as if into a foreign land” (2001).
 - “living together is a primal fact of nature; it is isolation, not co-operation, that needs to be explained.” (2001, p. 38).
- From the 2nd edition onwards: Tönnies emphasizes the explanatory value of the distinction. Community and society as “*Normalbegriffe*” (~Max Weber’s “ideal types”) (cf. Tönnies 2012 [1932], p. 271)

Walther's point of departure

- Walther doesn't start with Tönnies' characterization.
- But her analysis leads her to claim that
 - "[w]e here stand on the ground of those scholars (as, for instance, Ferdinand Tönnies and Giddings, to name only two), who see the essential trait of a community in that "feeling of belonging together," [*Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit*] that inner unification [*innere Einigung*]." (p. 70)
- How does she reach that conclusion?

- In a social community members have something in common. There is something that they share..
- But what is it that they share?
- Is it perhaps an external trait?
- “The members of a tribe and similar formations often wear the same folkloristic dress, the members of a union of totemists have the same totem animal as a tattoo, the members of one family have the same name. Indeed once thus be led to believe that a certain communal external trait would be essential for a community. But if we look more closely, we see that this claim cannot be upheld. **There are communities without such an external trait that would be common to all members—for instance, oftentimes the closest friendship ties oftentimes bear no external trait—**” (Walther 2025, p. 59)

- What about sharing a “corporeal life [*körperliches Leben*]” (p. 59)?
- “But also human beings, who have the same corporeal life, [19/20] by no means always appear to form a community, while, vice versa, human beings with very different corporeal life (handicapped and healthy people) are frequently united in a community” (Walther, p. 59)
- A social community doesn’t require sharing external markers, or bodily features, but rather the sharing of psychological elements.
- “there must obtain an entirely or partially identical *mental-spiritual life* with, at least partially, *identical intentional contents* or at least intentional directions, in order for a social community to exist.” (p. 59)

- Sharing of psychological elements is a necessary ingredient for community (**1***)
- But, according to Walther, it is not sufficient.
- Assume that A, B, and C are three scientists living in three different countries who are all working on the same scientific problem.
- “Let us assume, a someone in China, someone in Argentina and someone in Norway, all three had devoted their lives to the solution of one and the same scientific problem and have also used the same methods and tools. Their mental-spiritual life would thus have in its course, to be sure, largely the same intentional contents and would be carried out in the same manner. Nonetheless, so long as they do not know of each other, they will not form a community.” (p. 60)

- For a number of individuals to constitute a social community, it is not enough that they simply have the same kind of intentional state and are directed to the same kind of object.
- Such a match could obtain in situations where the individuals had no knowledge of each other.
- What must also be required *is some knowledge that the individuals have of each other.*

Knowing-of-each-other

- Is it sufficient to add the requirement that individuals must have knowledge-of-each-other (*Wissen-um-einander*)?
- “But let us assume, each of the three scientists knew strictly intellectually of the others—they know that they are investigating the same problem in the same manner as the others—would then already a community be given? Surely not!” (p. 60)
- Knowing about each other is a second necessary ingredient for community (**2***).
- But it is still not sufficient.
- The mere fact that each of the scientists knows about the existence of the other two would not as such make them into a community.

The importance of interaction

- Knowing-of-each-other \neq reciprocally affecting each other (*Wechselwirkung*)
- What if the scientists interacted with one another?
- “But what if, once they were to come into connection with one another, if they exchange the results of their research and compared them, in order to come to a solution to the problem “communally,” in short, if to the knowing-of-each-other a *reciprocal interaction* were added—would not here a community be given?” (p. 60)

- Much depends on how one understands the notion of “reciprocal interaction”.
- “Of course we must ask especially, what type of reciprocal interaction this is—physical, physiological, psychical, conscious-intentional—or something else?” (p. 60)

Physical reciprocal interaction

- “A purely physical reciprocal interaction obtains, say, when two fishermen’s boats bump into one another in impenetrable fog—and both boats sink, such that both drown. That such a purely mechanical-physical reciprocal interaction has little to do with a communalization of both fishermen—although they lead a somewhat identical life with somewhat identical life-contents—is clear.” (p. 60)

Physiological reciprocal interaction

- “It is similarly so in the case of a purely physiological reciprocal interaction. Let us take two students who study the same subject—say, medicine—but in different countries, not knowing each other in the least, meet each other on a vacation trip in the same train compartment. They do not talk to each other, but see perhaps in their dress and the books they read, that the other also studies medicine; they thus know of their partially identical life-contents. Let one of them have a common cold, the other typhoid: the student with typhoid infects the one with the common cold and vice versa, without knowing this either now or later. After riding together for a short passage, their paths separate and they never hear from each other again. Here, too, there is certainly no community between both, despite the purely physiological reciprocal interaction in their mutual infection.” (p. 61)

Psychological reciprocal affecting

- “A reciprocal interaction between human beings, no matter what type it may be, which is not a reciprocal affecting of mind to mind, of mental life to mental life, of consciousness to consciousness, from spirit to spirit (or mediated), we shall not consider. *It can, thus, only be an intentional reciprocal interaction (not to be mistaken with an intended-deliberate reciprocal interaction) or at least a mental reciprocal interaction with intentional components.*” (p. 61)
- Psychological reciprocal affecting is a third necessary ingredient for community (**3***)

Antagonism

- “But does this kind of intentional reciprocal interaction between the mental lives of two or more human beings in conjunction with our other moments mentioned above already suffice for the constitution and existence of a community? Two human beings who mutually scold and slap each other in the face, also, to be sure, stand in the relation of an (among other things) intentional reciprocal interaction and display, in addition, partly the same contents and expressive forms of their mental life; yet one will not claim that they form a community” (p. 61)

- “In order for them to be interconnected in a community, “communalized,” the members of a social formation have to stand, as is apparent, not only in any intentional reciprocal interaction in general, but they will also have to live, in reciprocal interaction with one another, the identical mental-spiritual life in relation to the same intentional contents *in the same sense* and in the same manner.” (p. 62)
- Does this mean that the members of a community must have the same intentional contents, intended in the same way?
- “Do we have in the case of every community, besides the members’ knowing of each other and their reciprocal interaction, also the same conscious contents, to which they all intentionally relate in exactly *the same manner*?” (p. 62)
- Not necessarily...

Division of labor

- “In many communities this is undoubtedly the case, for instance in communities of students and in all communities, where the same goal is striven for without any division of labor. [...] [A]s soon as in the reciprocal interaction of the members of a community a division of labor ensues, they do indeed refer intentionally to something common, but by no means in the same manner and also their mental-spiritual lived-experiencing does also run its course in exactly the same manner. We can already see this within the family—in which, as is known, historically the first division of labor began.” (p. 62)

- In social groups with a division of labour, the intentional contents of different members can be quite different.
- Complementarity, and not strict similarity is what matters.
- Division of labor is embedded in the context of an overarching unit, which provides a common content.
- How broad or narrow is the *common content* supposed to be?
- The common content can be quite general, and even something not "actual" or real...

- “Let us assume a group of children imagined in a game a jolly fairy and built a temple for her, in which they worship her in a well-organized game. They would form a “community of servants of this fairy.” Here, the intentional object of this community life (thus the life “in the service of the fairy”) indeed no actual object and is also not meant as such, because the children know, at bottom, full well that their fairy does not exist in actuality, but they just pretend. The only thing actual here is the children’s behavior “in the service of the fairy.” Nonetheless, here the children can be communalized “in the service of the fairy,” even though they do not stand in an actual relation to it. It would certainly be a community of a very peculiar sort, but a community nonetheless.” (p. 64)

Difference and complementarity

- “What is necessary for the community is, thus, on the “objective” side in the broadest sense merely the same intention toward an identical object in the broadest sense, whereby nothing yet is said about the manner of representation and being of this object. (It can be an actual, non-actual or fictitious formation of whichever form.)” (pp. 64-65)
- “This mental-spiritual life of the different members must rather [...] allow itself to be united to a unified whole, to the same complex of meaning.” (p. 65)

- “Let us take, on the one hand, an entirely uneducated elderly woman living on a farm, who has never traveled outside her remote village. This woman now hears that Germany is at war and that it will have to win the war—all of a sudden, she knits socks for the soldiers in order to contribute *in her way* to “Germany’s victory.” Thus, Germany’s victory is in this case the intentional object at which her actions are directed. On the other hand, let us take the German Kaiser as commander-in-chief of the army of the Reich, and his activities for the sake of a victorious outcome of the German army. Of course, here there is a nearly unbridgeable difference between the vision that the Kaiser has of Germany’s victory—and his activities for this purpose—and that of the elderly woman regarding Germany’s victory and her contribution to it. Nonetheless, both the Kaiser and the elderly woman refer intentionally to the same object—Germany’s victory—and their activity motivated by the latter can, despite all differences, be united to a common, unified total action with a unified motivational complex.” (p. 66)

- “the opposing generals might have a representation of the German army and its victory that comes much closer to that of the Kaiser than to that of the elderly woman. Nonetheless, between them and the *Kaiser* there is no unification, since the entirety of the generals’ actions and endeavors intend, with respect to that same intentional object (Germany’s victory), to foil everything the *Kaiser* undertakes. Their actions thus form no unified complex of meaning *in the same direction* {28} with his” (p. 66)

A musical analogy

- “Hence, the significance of the unified complex of meaning, which must obtain in the members of the community with respect to the identical intentional object in their communal life and acting, has been clarified: It is like a pervasive leitmotif, which runs through the mental-spiritual life within the community in all of its members, although all of them play in different variations and with different instruments. Everybody must play, in his own manner, such that he ultimately does not disrupt, despite all deviations, the entire piece with its total harmony, but instead lets it arise together with the other players and thusly realizes it.” (p. 66)

- “We found a given number of people who refer, in a certain stratum of their life, to the *same intentional* object in the broadest sense. These people had to have a *knowledge-of-one-another and in their relation to the identical intentional object*. On the basis of this knowledge, they entered into *direct or indirect reciprocal interaction with one another* and from this reciprocal interaction arose a *common life* (perhaps with common products), which was motivated *by that intention [29/30] toward the identical object in the broadest sense immediately or mediately in a unified sense.*” (p. 68)

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Summing up

- So far, Walther has proposed that community has three necessary conditions:
 - 1*: Identical or overlapping intentional contents across members.
 - Such identity or overlapping can be at a quite general level
 - 2*: Members have to know about each other.
 - 3*: Members have to affect each other reciprocally and psychologically.
- But are these conditions *sufficient* for community?

- Walther argues that something would still be missing.
- “Let us take, as example, a number of randomly collected workers, Slovaks, Poles, Italians, and so on, who work at a construction site. They do not understand their respective languages, do not know each other, have never had any dealings with each other in the past—all they want is to make a living and have been accidentally hired by the same contractor. Now they have to erect a wall, some bring the bricks, others pass them to the others and finally pass them on to the bricklayers, who butter them with mortar and lay them upon one another—the work must be done in a certain rhythm in order not to be held up—everybody has to recognize the other and take and pass on the bricks at the same pace in order not to interrupt the continuity of the work. Perhaps the workers also cook and live together, so long as they are employed at the site. Now do they form a community?” (p. 69)

- The group of workers interact in order to obtain the same goal.
- They work together, but they might still consider each other with suspicion or at best with indifference.
- “We assumed that the workers do not further know each other; we added that they belonged to different nations with different languages. Now let us further add that they beheld each other in a suspicious or even inimical manner, as competitors for the wage, as members of alien nations. Can we, in this case, speak of a community, despite all conscious external reciprocal interaction and equal intention in their behavior? In our opinion, one can only speak here of a *social* connection, of a certain type.” (p. 69)

- What is missing is the presence of an inner bond or connection (*innere Verbundenheit*), a feeling of belonging together (*Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit*).
- It is only when this feeling is present that a social formation becomes a true community.
- “But if now, instead of the inner strangeness and indifference, even hostility, to all these other determinants was added an *inner connectedness*, of whichever sort whatsoever—it can be as loose as possible, have a minimal extension, pertained only to the common life of the construction site, and have only the duration of the same—do we then see a community before us? It seems to us that here—and *only* here—do we have a true community. Only through its inner connectedness, that feeling of belonging together—it can be as loose and limited as can be—a social formation turns into a community.” (p. 71)

The feeling of belonging together

- “We here stand on the ground of those scholars (as, for instance, Ferdinand Tönnies and Giddings, to name only two), who see the essential trait of a community in that “*feeling of belonging together*,” [*Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit*] that *inner unification* [*innere Einigung*]. All social formations who display such an inner unification of their members, and *only* those, are, in our opinion, communities, and only in these cases one can, strictly speaking (as we believe), speak of *communal* lived-experiences, activities, goals, strivings, willings, wishings, and so on (vis-a-vis the same or *similar* lived-experiences, activities, and so on, which may only obtain perhaps in the case of social connections), but for that reason not *all social* connections display such a feeling of belonging together, such an inner connectedness.” (p. 71)

2. The theory of inner unification

- “Inner unification” or the “feeling of belonging together”
- A key notion to understand Walther’s investigation on the essence of social communities.
- An original contribution by Walther (drawing mostly on work by Pfänder).
- Unification is not an act of cognition, or a judgement, but a feeling (p. 72).

- Inner unification can happen with respect to a broad range of intentional objects (not only other people!)
 - “inner unification can direct itself not only at other human beings, but also to all kinds of {49} objects in the broadest sense: to objects of nature (plants, animals, landscapes, stones, and so on), artifacts (pieces of music, paintings, statues, buildings, literary works of all types, and so on), scientific formations (scientific systems, methods, certain branches of science, and so on), religious formations (creeds, “holy scriptures,” rituals, and so on), technical formations (bridges, machines, and so on), ideal formations (geometric figures and mathematical formulas, syllogisms, and so on), social formations (certain constitutions, economic systems, certain communities, and so on), supra-human persons, fictitious objects, and so on. Intentional analysis shows that inner unification can be directed at all these different objects and types of objects.” (p. 85)
- Unification with other people as a species of a broader phenomenon.

- "Above, we spoke of a "feeling of belonging together." What did we mean with this concept? We said it is a feeling, hence it is not an act of cognition or a judgment, as if, say, every member of the community (inwardly or outwardly-expressly) ascertained or stated that he now viewed these other members as belonging to himself, that he takes himself to be connected to them in the totality of his being, or connected only in part, only in regard to a certain aspect, of his spiritual-mental life. We find nothing of this sort of cognizing or ascertaining in the case of inner unification, even though it may be added to the latter and built upon it. We also mean nothing of the sort of some vague awareness of the other members, no matter how vague, an awareness in the background of our mental life, thus without any concentrated, attentive, intentional observing of the others. We mean none of this with unification, for otherwise it would not distinguish itself significantly from the knowing-of-each-other on the part of the members." (p. 72)

- “All of a sudden, a warm, affirmative mental wave of greater or lesser power, more or less suddenly and forcefully or calmly and mildly, flows through the entire subject, or a part of it, or only a very “thin” sphere of it. This feeling seems to envelop the entire mental life and its respective complex of lived-experiences with a warm light {35} and now also penetrates from the background of consciousness into the sphere of the awakened foreground of consciousness with its wakefully perceiving and all-experiencing Ego-moment. It seems to immerse it entirely, to stream through it toward its object. It is as if this wave carried the entire subject with its perceiving Ego, now fully immersed by it mentally, toward its object of unification.” (p. 72)

- “This unification is, at first, a current lived-experience, an act radiating out from the Ego-“point” in which it now lives. The Ego-“point” extends here to its object of unification and unites with it into a more or less powerful, warm and intense emotional “stream,” which, arising in the background, enters into the Ego or is freely taken up by it, and now carries it over intentionally to the object of unification. The Ego now resides mentally in this object in continual calmness so long as the unification endures.” (p. 73)
- Unification as a form of intentionality arising from the ego: *ego-cogito-cogitatum*

Varieties of unification

- (i) Current unification
- (ii) Subconscious/unconscious unification
- (iii) Habitual unification
- Unification (and communalization) happens at different levels of the mind.

(i) Current unification

- "In the case of the current unification, we find a constant onlooking of the Ego toward its intentional object of unification, accompanied by a stream of emotions continually issuing forth from the inner center of emotions and by a constant mental-intentional giving-of-oneself-into (of letting-of-oneself-be-taken-in by) of the subject into {39} the object of unification. It is a constant extending-of-oneself, or, better, a constant being-extended-into, stemming from the Ego of the subject to its object of unification, combined with a residing in it" (p. 76)

(ii) Subconscious/unconscious unification

- “the subject of unification extends its Ego inwardly intentionally toward its object of unification. This extending-toward, however, will only obtain in the case of a *current* unification; it will most likely be lacking in the case of an un- or subconscious concrescence [*Zusammenwachsen*] with the object of unification. Here it appears that the entire process of unification takes place “behind the back” of the Ego, it is as if the object and subject of unification came into that relation of mental residing-within-one-another without any additional action of the Ego, without its current lived-experiencing and knowing.” (p. 73)
- “In it [subconscious/unconscious unification], the Ego, as we saw, plays absolutely no role, neither actively nor passively.” (p. 75)

Subconscious/unconscious unification as “mere concrecence”

- “This mere concrecence occurs without any additional activity, influence, and position-taking on the part of the Ego. It takes place in the “subconscious,” in the background. The Ego of the respective person “knows” nothing of this, it is completely in the dark and in no way experiences it, because it takes place entirely “behind the back” of the Ego.” (p. 73)

(iii) Habitual unification

- Habitual unification happens when actual unifications recede to the background of consciousness.
 - Consider the example of friends who feel unified with each other at a point in time, but for whom that unification also becomes a habitual state of mind.
- “This unconscious unification is to be distinguished sharply from a current unification that has become *habitual*. For the latter at one point was current, has already gone through the Ego, has been experienced and enacted by it. In this form of unification, there is always, in principle, the possibility (although it may not be able to come about factually for various empirical reasons) that the Ego presentifies in its current activity, through recollection, a prior point in time, while some thing of this sort is, precisely for essential reasons, excluded in the case of unconscious concrescence.” (p. 74)

- “what if, despite the ceasing of the current unification, the unification itself does not cease—what is the case then? Now the subject with its Ego-“point” indeed recoils—more or less vigorously—it no longer extends over to the object of unification, no longer looks to it—yet the “fabric” of unification is thereby not torn apart. Something very peculiar takes place here! [...] This Ego-“point” above it in the foreground of consciousness has, in the meantime, turned toward lived-experiences with other objects, but the previous lived-experience still radiates into these lived-experiences, it resonates, so to speak, through the entire stream of lived-experiences, although it is no longer contained as current lived-experience in it, and the Ego is also no longer aware of it. Nonetheless, this lived-experience reverberates throughout the entire mental life, like a note from an organ, imprints it with a particular coloration and in all lived-experiences, which somehow belong to it, softly rings out.” (pp. 76-77)

- Habitual unification is not the same as a recollection of an earlier (but already passed) experience of unification.
- “the recollected lived-experience is encapsulated within itself and has come to an end, it is “neutralized,” dead, it has no more mental vital power within itself, which, streaming from a deeper source, could seize the Ego, such that it now could again live in it” (p. 78)
- “The habitual lived-experience [...] essentially distinguishes itself from it [the recollected lived-experience] through its position toward the source of the lived-experience. For it is not severed from it and ultimately cut off, {43} as the dead, extinguished, recollected lived-experience, but is still connected to it, has not yet severed itself from the stream of life.” (p. 79)

More on habitual unification

- “The Ego is perhaps not aware of it, perhaps it even “thinks” it is extinguished. But this is not the case. It can, rather, arise *itself*, as the same *identical* lived-experience, from the background, from the self, nourished from the same sources as before, and seize the Ego (or can be seized by it) and actualize itself. It is the *same, identical* lived-experience, not a new, similar one, which might have rekindled itself from its dead recollected image.” (p. 79)
- According to Walther, there is more to mental life than the Ego.

- “in the case of the habitual lived-experience, it can once again live through the *same, identical* lived-experience, while this is essentially impossible once and for all in the case of the extinguished, recollected lived-experience. On the other hand, the current unification, having become habitual, is distinguished from a mere concrescence through the position vis-à-vis the Ego, while it has the same position vis-à-vis the source of lived-experience. Neither have severed the stream of life from the source of lived-experience, but are constantly nourished by it, and both—the habitual as well as the unconscious lived-experience—“lie” in the background of consciousness, while the Ego, living in other lived-experiences, is directed at its objects. Both can {44} also shake up the entire mental stream of life “subterraneously.”” (p. 80)

Unification as a *feeling*

- “We are thus dealing with a feeling of belonging-to-oneself of the object in some way on the part of a subject, not, say, with the explicit assertion that the subject views, or would wish to view, this or that object as belonging to it. Such an assertion may accompany the feeling of unification, certainly at times it can bring it about, but it is in no way identical with it, since the feeling of unification can fail to appear or disappear despite such a rational assessment or intention.”
(p. 81)

Walther's example: feeling "at home" in a room

- "Such a unification obtains, for instance, when one enters a room and immediately feels "at home" in it, be it only for the duration of the visit in this room or also—as a habitual unification—when one is not even in the room and also does not think of it. Indeed, the intended duration of a unification has nothing to do with the actual spatio-temporal being-together of subject and object of unification. The unification can end even though such a being-together still obtains, but it can also continue when this has been annulled, perhaps is no longer possible. (So, for instance, some people are unified for the rest of their lives with their parental home and all its rooms, although it may have been destroyed a long time ago.)" (pp. 81-82)

Unification and habituation

- “we also distinguish the unification in the broadest sense from other forms of lived-experience, in which various objects are combined with the subject, for instance, through habits, or also through any fleeting or lasting (habitual), rational or volitional or other intentional relations between object and subject. **What is lacking in all these relations is the feeling of inner “belonging-to-one-another,” which characterizes the relation of subject to the object in the case of unification.** Also, in the habituation to an object, this difference seems to obtain, although here it is especially difficult to discern it, because in many cases a unification is added to the habituation. Nonetheless, there is undoubtedly such a thing as habituation without unification. For instance, it may come to pass that one may be forced to rent a room with the most hideous furniture and to live in it for an extended period of time. In the beginning, one is constantly annoyed with one’s surrounding, but finally one “habituates” oneself to it, although one finds it as hideous as on the first day and separates one self from it and distances oneself from it inwardly just as much as before.” (p. 83)

Unification and community

- “Personal communities” and “objective communities”
- “The unification with non-human objects alone never suffices for the grounding of a community, as is always possible in the case of unification with other human beings. For the purpose of grounding a community, a unification with other human beings must always be built on the former. In the case of unifications grounding communities, we must distinguish most essentially, whether they orient themselves: a) directly at other human beings, with whom the subject then unifies into a community; or whether b) the subject unifies itself with certain non-human objects or spheres of objects and only on the basis of this unification feels unified with other human beings, “who also” are combined with these objects or stand in some other positive [...] in the broadest sense) relation to them.” (p. 85)
- “Personal communities” and “objective communities” can be combined with each other.

Unification and reciprocity

- “For a grounding, for an innermost funding of a community what is needed is not just the unification of *one* subject with all others and a reciprocal interaction between them, but instead a unification of *every* subject with *all* others, a *general “reciprocal unification,”* [*Wechseleinigung*] which is experienced by the standpoint of the individual subject as a reciprocal unification.” (p. 98)

Is it possible to be in community with inanimate objects?

- “Here lies also the ultimate, deepest ground for why a communalization (and a social connection in general) of a subject with soulless objects is impossible—likewise, of course, a social connection of soulless objects amongst themselves. All communalization presupposes precisely unification and reciprocation of the unification, reciprocal unification. All socialization presupposes some form of intentional relation of response, a reciprocal interaction. For the latter it is necessary, however, that the objects with which a subject communalizes (or socializes) itself are also capable of an intentional movement and relation of their own, thus that they are ensouled (spiritual) creatures, endowed with consciousness.” (p. 98)

- Social communities arise from *reciprocal unification*.
- The possibility of reciprocation is foreclosed in the case of inanimate objects.
- In spite of this difference, note that Walther seems to think of reciprocal unification as reducible to acts of unilateral, non-reciprocal unification.
- The basic unit of analysis is unilateral unification, which, when targeting other human beings, is not categorically different from unification with inanimate objects.

Group discussion

1. Do you find convincing Walther's analysis of unification?
2. Do you agree with Walther that a "feeling of belonging together" is the essential feature of community?