Intersubjectivity, Sociality, Community: The Contribution of the Early Phenomenologists

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Abstract and Keywords

The chapter discusses how various early phenomenologists by starting from an examination of empathy and other forms of dyadic interpersonal relations went on to develop analyses of larger social units in order to address questions concerning the nature of our communal being-together. More specifically, it shows how an investigation of dyadic empathic encounters figures prominently in not only Husserl's, but also Scheler's and Walther's subsequent analyses of experiential sharing and we-intentionality. Not all phenomenologists, however, agreed with this prioritization of second-person engagement and face-to-face relationships. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of Gurwitsch's and Heidegger's criticisms and alternative approaches.

Keywords: empathy, second-person engagement, communal experiences, we-intentionality, Husserl, Scheler, Walther, Heidegger, Gurwitsch

WHEN discussing the history and development of phenomenological accounts of intersubjectivity, one can encounter different narratives. One narrative is that a decisive rupture exists between Husserl and other phenomenologists. According to that narrative, Husserl only started to realize the challenge of intersubjectivity fairly late. His commitment to methodological solipsism, his trenchant idealism, and his disregard of the role of embodiment, however, seriously impeded his efforts and ultimately meant that his attempt to develop a phenomenology of intersubjectivity failed. By contrast, later phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas all realized the significance and importance of intersubjectivity from early on. Rather than desperately trying to fit intersubjectivity into an already fossilized framework, Heidegger would argue that a basic constituent of Dasein's *being-in-the-world* is its *being-with*. And while Merleau-Ponty would insist that embodiment is crucial to both self-experience and other-experience and that the foreign body and my own body form a single whole, an *intercorporeity* by virtue of their structural similarity, Levinas would go even further and propose that ethics should serve as a new first philosophy.

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I have in previous writings sought to offer a competing narrative. Not only was Husserl the first to employ and discuss the notion of intersubjectivity in a comprehensive and systematic manner, but his profound analyses also exerted a decisive (positive) influence on later phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Levinas (Zahavi 1996, 1999). In the present contribution, I will again seek to challenge the standard narrative with its privileging of post-Husserlian phenomenology, but this time by taking a closer look at some of the rich contributions to a phenomenology of sociality that can be found in the first decades of the twentith century. More specifically, I will show how various early phenomenologists by starting from an examination of empathy and other forms of dyadic interpersonal relations would develop analyses of larger social units (p. 735) and ultimately offer accounts of our communal being-together. Due to the comprehensiveness of these early investigations, however, it will be impossible to cover all aspects in a single chapter.[1] In the following, my focus will be on some central ideas found in Husserl, Scheler, Walther, and Gurwitsch.[2]

37.1 Husserl on Empathy

Whereas Husserl's investigation of intentionality in *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900–1) paid scant attention to the problem of intersubjectivity, let alone to collective forms of intentionality, the situation soon changed. Within five years, Husserl was working on empathy (as shown by texts gathered in *Husserliana* 13). That Husserl took empathy to be a topic of particular importance is not only revealed by the fact that he kept working on it for the rest of his life, but also by his decision to dwell on it in his very last lecture course from the winter semester of 1928/9, which was entitled *Phänomenologie der Einfühlung in Vorlesungen und Übungen*.

Initially, Husserl's discussion of empathy was informed by his encounter with the work of Theodor Lipps, the influential philosopher and psychologist, who was also the teacher of a number of Munich phenomenologists. In various writings, Lipps had defended the view that empathy was a *sui generis* kind of knowledge, one that provided us with knowledge of other minds, and which could be explained in terms of specific mechanisms of imitation and projection (Zahavi 2010, 2014). Husserl disagreed with Lipps' explanation and in his own writings often used the term empathy (*Einfühlung*) interchangeably with the terms other-experience (*Fremderfahrung*) or other-perception (*Fremdwahrnehmung*). These terms are already suggestive of Husserl's understanding of empathy. As he writes in *Ideen II*:

> Empathy is not a mediate experience in the sense that the other would be experienced as a psychophysical annex to his corporeal body but is instead an immediate experience of the other.
>
> (Husserl 1989: 384–5, translation modified)

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Along similar lines, Husserl speaks of how the other is given in his being-for-me (*Für-mich-sein*) in empathy, and how that counts as a form of perception (Husserl 1973c: 641). If I talk with another, if we see one another with our own eyes, there is an immediate contact, an immediately experienced personal relationship. We "see" the other qua (p. 736) person, and not merely as body (Husserl 1989: 385). Indeed, when speaking of how we encounter foreign subjectivity, Husserl also writes that:

> It would be countersensical to say that it [foreign subjectivity] is inferred and not experienced when given in this original form of empathic presentation. For every hypothesis concerning a foreign subject already presupposes the "perception" of this subject as foreign, and empathy is precisely this perception.
>
> (Husserl 1973b: 352)

In some manuscripts, Husserl talks of empathy as that which permits us to encounter true transcendence, and also writes that our consciousness in empathy transcends itself and is confronted with otherness of a completely new kind (Husserl 1973b: 8–9, 442). It should consequently not come as a surprise that Husserl is critical of the suggestion that empathy involves some kind of reproduction or reduplication of oneself (Husserl 1973a: 188, 1973b: 525). To experience the other is not to engage in a kind of imaginative self-transformation, since that would only allow me to encounter myself as other and not to encounter a true other (Husserl 1973c: 314). Furthermore, although it is true that we sometimes imagine what it must be like for the other, what the other must be going through, it is simply unconvincing to claim that every act of empathy involves imagination. When we empathically understand the other, we do so immediately and often without any imaginative depiction, and in those circumstances where we do depict the other's experience imaginatively, we precisely consider this an exception (Husserl 1973a: 188).

An important feature of Husserl's analysis, one that will prove significant for what follows, is that empathic understanding normally involves co-attending to the object of the other's experience (Husserl 1973c: 427, 513). It is consequently important to emphasize that the other, rather than being given to me simply as a nucleus of experiences, is given as a center of orientation, as a perspective on the world. The other is precisely given to me as intentional, as directed at the same world as I, and the other's world, and the objects that are there for him, is given along with the other (Husserl 1973b: 140, 287, 1973a: 411, 1989: 177):

> Regardless of how one describes this experiencing-of-another . . . more precisely—whether it be called "empathy" or "comprehending experiencing" or whatever else—it remains a form of experience. We refer to this now, in order to point out that conjointly with the empathic experience of the other the following peculiarity accrues: when comprehending his experiencing, my experience normally passes through his experiencing and reaches all the way through to what he experiences.
>
> (Husserl 2008: 617)

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An implication of this is that I rarely thematize the other as an object, when I empathize with him. By contrast, the primary object in sympathy (*Mitgefühl*), care and pity (*Mitleid*) is not the object of the other's distress, but the other him- or herself. The intentional object of the other's distress and the intentional object of my sympathy (p. 737) consequently differ. To use Husserl's own example, if the other is sad about the fact that his mother had died, I am also sad about this, and sad about the fact that he is sad. However, it is his sadness that is my primary object, and it is only subsequently and conditional upon that that the death of his mother is something that also saddens me (Husserl 1973b: 189–90). More generally speaking, Husserl was quite clear about the distinction between empathy and sympathy. We find similar, but more fine-grained distinctions in Scheler.

37.2 Scheler on the Variety of Social Formations

Due to his dissatisfaction with Lipps' account of empathy, Scheler rarely talked of empathy (*Einfühlung*), but preferred to use the term *Nachfühlen*, which the English translation not very helpfully renders as reproduced or vicarious feeling. This is a problematic translation, since Scheler was quite explicit in his rejection of the view that our understanding of the experiential life of others always involves some kind of reproduction of or participation in the foreign experience. Instead, he defended the view that in a number of central cases we can enjoy a basic and direct experiential recognition and grasp of the minded life of others as it is perceptually manifest in their bodily expressivity (Scheler 2008: 9–10, 218, 260). Like Husserl, Scheler also occasionally spoke of *Fremdwahrnehmung* (other-perception),[3] and for the sake of simplicity, I will in the following simply translate *Nachfühlen* as empathy.[4]

What is more important in this context, however, is the fact that Scheler goes on to distinguish empathy (*Nachfühlen)* from three other related phenomena, namely sympathy (*Mitgefühl*), emotional contagion (*Gefühlsansteckung*), and emotional sharing (*Mitfühlen* or *Miteinanderfühlen*). In order to feel sympathy for somebody who is suffering, you first need to realize or recognize that the other is indeed suffering. So for Scheler it is not through sympathy that I first learn of someone's being in pain, rather the latter's suffering must already be given in some form to me, must already be understood (p. 738) by me, if I am to feel sympathy for him (Scheler 2008: 8). Whereas empathy provides this prior perceptually based understanding, sympathy adds the emotional response.

Consider now, by contrast, the case of emotional contagion. You might join a carnival and be swept over by the jolly atmosphere or you might encounter a funeral procession and your mood might drop. A distinctive feature of *emotional contagion* is that you literally catch the emotion in question (Scheler 2008: 15). It is transferred to you. It becomes your own emotion. In emotional contagion, the feeling you are infected by is not phenomenally given as belonging to another, but as your own. It is only its causal origin that points to the other (Scheler 2008: 37). Indeed, when infected by the panic or the jolly mood of others you might not even be aware of them as distinct individuals. But all of this is precisely

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what makes emotional contagion different from empathy and sympathy. For Scheler, in both of the latter cases, the difference between self and other is preserved and upheld. It is *your* emotion that *I* perceptually grasp; it is *your* distress that *my* commiseration is directed at (Scheler 2008: 23, 64). To suggest that sympathy involves some kind of fusion with the other is, according to Scheler, to transform sympathy into a form of (supra-individual) egoism. This is also, why Scheler rejects the proposal that the existence of sympathy and compassion should ultimately testify to the metaphysical unity of all individuals (Scheler 2008: 51, 54).

A limiting case of emotional contagion is what Scheler called emotional identification (*Einsfühlung*). He discusses a variety of different examples, including totemism, hypnotism, and sexual intercourse, but also, and this is something I will return to shortly, the case of the mass or mob, where the respective members not only identify with the despotic leader, but also through various processes of contagion coalesce into a single "stream of instinct and feeling, whose pulse thereafter governs the behaviour of all . . . like leaves before a storm" (Scheler 2008: 25).

What then about the case of what Scheler terms *emotional sharing* (*Mitfühlen*):

> The father and the mother stand beside the dead body of a beloved child. They feel in common the "same" sorrow, the "same" anguish. It is not that A feels this sorrow and B feels it also, and moreover that they both know they are feeling it. No, it is a *feeling-in-common*. A's sorrow is in no way "objectual" for B here, as it is, e.g., for their friend C, who joins them, and commiserates "with them" or "upon their sorrow." On the contrary, they feel it together, in the sense that they feel and experience in common, not only the self-same value-situation, but also the same keenness of emotion in regard to it. The sorrow, as value-content, and the grief, as characterizing the functional relation thereto, are here *one and identical*.
>
> (Scheler 2008: 12–13, translation modified)

As is clear from the example, Scheler denies that emotional sharing should be understood as individual experience plus reciprocal knowledge, that is, he denies that it can be understood along the following line: independently of each other, but in parallel, individual A has a token experience of type x, individual B has a token experience of type x and, in addition, they each have knowledge of the other (Scheler 1973: 526). If this (p. 739) construal is rejected, however, what might a positive account of emotional sharing look like? It is clear from Scheler's description that both parents are intentionally directed at the same object and are also evaluating it in the same manner. Scheler also emphasizes, however, that the parents are feeling something *together*, i.e., that what they experience is not independent of the relation they have to each other. This makes their relation different from the situation where, say, a friend of the couple becomes sad by witnessing their grieving (Scheler 2008: 12–13, 37). In the latter case, the friend is intentionally directed at the grieving parents—and his intentional object is consequently different from theirs. Moreover, although he is sad, their grief does not become his, it is not felt by him as *ours*. As Scheler points out, in sympathy, the other's grief is first given to me as belonging to

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the other, and my commiseration and the other's grief are consequently phenomenologically given as two different facts. In emotional sharing, by contrast, the empathic grasp of the other's state and the emotional sharing are so intertwined that they are not experientially given as distinct (Scheler 2008: 13). In addition, Scheler is quite clear about the need for a careful distinction between 1) the phenomenon of "mutual coalescence," which he finds exemplified in fusional forms of love, where the individualities of the partners seem to dissolve and relapse into a single life-stream, and 2) a proper consciousness of "us" which is "founded on the respective self-awareness of each" (Scheler 2008: 25). Emotional sharing, experiencing an emotion as *ours*, consequently involves and requires not only a directedness to and evaluation of the very same object, but also a non-objectifying awareness of the other as co-attender and co-evaluator (which is why empathy is required rather than simply being superfluous). We are presented with a situation where the participating individuals are given as co-subjects, and where what they feel is constitutively interdependent, i.e., dependent upon the relation they have to each other.

The decisive step forward is now taken not in *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1913/23),[5] but in *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (1913/16) where Scheler suggests that the different ways of experiencing one another just outlined also constitute distinctly different social units and group formations, i.e., different ways of being together. The task of a philosophical sociology is, as he puts it, precisely to develop a theory of these different social formations (Scheler 1973: 525).

The most primitive formation, the *mass* or *horde* is constituted through processes of contagion and involuntary imitation (Scheler 1973: 526). It is characterized by the absence of individual self-consciousness and self-responsibility and does not yet amount to any real we-formation. A more sophisticated type of social unity is one that Scheler calls *life-community* (*Lebensgemeinschaft*). It is distinguished by some amount of empathy and experiential sharing, since the individual members have some understanding of and solidarity with each other, but it remains a non-objectifying understanding. It is not as if each member takes the other member(s) as his or her intentional object, (p. 740) nor is this understanding one that precedes or is separate from the co-experiencing (*Miterleben*). Furthermore, according to Scheler, the mutual understanding among members of such a community is non-inferential, it requires no inference from a manifest expression to a concealed experience, nor does the formation of a common will require contracts or the making of promises (Scheler 1973: 526–7), rather a basic trust pervades the community (Scheler 1973: 529).

Although Scheler again emphasizes that experiential sharing cannot be explained in terms of parallel experiences plus reciprocal knowledge, and although he argues that there is neither a division between my experience and your experience, nor between my experience and my bodily expressivity, we are not faced with an undifferentiated fusional unity. In contrast to two further social formations, which I will discuss shortly, however, Scheler does argue that the individuality of the community members is somewhat derived. As he writes, "the experiences of an individual are given to him as single experiences, but only on the basis of a special singularizing act that clips him, as it were, out of

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the communal whole" (Scheler 1973: 527). Each member can, so to speak, stand in for any other member, all of them being interchangeable representatives of the same supra-individual communal unity. For that very reason, we are at this stage not yet dealing with a truly personal community, i.e., with a community of mature individuals. The members are rather defined by their communal position and function in say, the family, clan, or tribe. Indeed, at one point, Scheler emphasizes the primitiveness and immaturity of the life-community when remarking that it is made up of "people who are *not of age*" (Scheler 1973: 529).

A third social unity is what Scheler calls society (*Gesellschaft*). This is an artificial unity of individuals that lacks the primordial and organic living-with-one-another (*Miteinanderleben*) characterizing the life-community. All contact between these self-conscious and mature individuals are accomplished through specific cognitive acts, where one individual directs his or her attention towards the other. In addition, Scheler also claims that the kind of other-understanding obtained in societal contexts necessarily presupposes a separation between the bodily expressivity of the other and his or her experiences, a separation that is then bridged by analogical inference (or some similar cognitive process). The society lacks co-responsibility and true solidarity in the form of one for all and all for one, and is instead based on contractual obligations and instrumental and strategic interests. Distrust remains the basic attitude (Scheler 1973: 528–9).

The fourth and final form of social formation discussed by Scheler is the one he calls personal community (*Persongemeinschaft*). It amounts to a unity of irreplaceable individuals that together form a collective person (*Gesamtperson*). Although this (ideal) social unity is not an actual synthesis of life-community and society, essential characteristics of both are, as Scheler writes, co-given in it (Scheler 1973: 539). There is genuine and mature individuality as well as real communal unity. What we find here, are true individuals who at the same time are community members, and who experience themselves as both simultaneously. One's true individuality flourishes and comes to fruition in the social unit, which would not be the unit it is, were it not for the individuality of its members. On this level, we also encounter a new type of mutual loving solidarity, one (p. 741) that involves both self-responsibility and co-responsibility (Scheler 1973: 534). Whereas the natural unity of the life-community has been praised by romanticists, and whereas the rational organization of society has been applauded by liberals, both have according to Scheler been equally wrong and failed to realize how both of these social formations are subordinate to the personal community (Scheler 1973: 540).

How should one understand the relation between these different social formations? First of all, it is crucial not to interpret Scheler's distinctions as if they were supposed to describe the historical development of concretely existing social units. It is not as if *homo sapiens* first gathered in hordes, then moved on to the more developed stage of life-communities, and then after some time of maturation adopted a form of societal existence, in order finally to enter the personal-communal stage. No, the four formations are elements that occur in any concrete social unity, or as Scheler writes "at all places and at all times *all* of these forms and their corresponding ethoses have in some measure been present in

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various *mixtures*" (Scheler 1973: 541). This is not to deny, however, that there are founding relations obtaining between them, founding relations which furthermore mirror those obtaining between emotional contagion, empathy, sympathy, and emotional sharing (Scheler 2008: 96). As Scheler, for instance, writes apropos the relation between society and life-community:

> The basic nexus is this: there can be *no society without life-community* (though there can be life-community without society). All *possible* society is therefore *founded* through community.
>
> (Scheler 1973: 531)

As Scheler proceeds to point out, this does not mean than any societal group must necessarily also be bound together as a community. It only means that 1) individuals who enter into societal relations must previously have participated in a communal life, and 2) that any concrete societal combination of individuals is only possible if the individuals in question are at the same time communal members (though not necessarily members of the same community) (Scheler 1973: 532). Part of the argument offered for this line of reasoning is that the kind of being-with-one-another found in a life-community serves as a precondition for the kind of analogical reasoning found in society (Scheler 1973: 531). But what kind of interpersonal understanding is it that we find in life-communities? Whereas the mass is constituted and characterized by emotional contagion and identification, the society by analogical reasoning, and the personal community by experiential and emotional sharing (Scheler 1973: 520), it is somewhat more controversial what the binding principle of a life-community is. In *Der Formalismus*, Scheler highlights the role of emotional and experiential sharing for the life-community as well (Scheler 1973: 526). In *Wesen und Formen der Sympathy*, by contrast, Scheler writes that it is a fundamental principle of the evolution of feeling, be it from child to adult, from animal to man, or from savagery to civilization, that we first encounter emotional identification and later empathy. Thus, whereas we in the mass and horde find true identification, we first find empathy in the communal life of the family (Scheler 2008: 97). As Krebs has rightly pointed out, however, given that empathy for Scheler is compatible with indifference (p. 742) and even cruelty, this is a somewhat surprising statement and does not resonate well with Scheler's claim that the communal life is characterized by trust and basic solidarity (Krebs 2015: 130).

37.3 Walther and the Feeling of Togetherness

In 1921, a few years after the publication of the second part of Scheler's *Formalismus* (1916), Walther defended her doctoral dissertation *Ein Beitrag zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften*. As indicated by the title, her focus is on the nature of the social community, and as she readily acknowledges at the outset, her investigation presupposes and builds upon the analysis of empathy offered by phenomenologists such as Scheler and Stein (Walther 1923: 17).

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Like Scheler (and before him Tönnies), Walther distinguishes a society from a community and argues that whereas the former designates an aggregation of individuals who decide to join forces based on purely strategic or instrumental considerations, a community is formed by individuals who understand themselves and others as members of a *we*, and who are tied together by bonds of solidarity.

What must be in place for a plurality of individuals to constitute a community? A community is distinguished by the fact that its members have something in common, there is something they share (Walther 1923: 19). However, it is certainly not enough that they merely have the same kind of intentional state and are directed at the same kind of object. Such a match could obtain even in situations where the individuals have no awareness or knowledge of each other. What must also be required is that the individuals have some knowledge of each other, and furthermore that this knowledge is of a special kind. Assume that A, B, and C are three scientists living in three different countries who are all working on the same scientific problem. 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 (Walther 1923: 20). But what if they interacted with one another? As Walther observes, such a reciprocal interaction, where each individual influences the intentional life of the other certainly brings us closer to what we are after. However, something would still be missing. Consider the case of a group of workers who are brought together to finish a construction, and who interact in order to obtain the same goal. To some extent, they work together, but they might still consider each other with suspicion or at best with indifference (Walther 1923: 31). Seen from without, they might be indistinguishable from a communal group, but they only form a society and not a community. For the latter to obtain, something more is needed. What is missing in an inner bond or connection (*innere Verbundenheit*), a feeling of togetherness (*Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit*), or reciprocal unification (*Wechseleinigung*). Only when the latter is present does a social formation become a community (Walther 1923: 33, 63):

(p. 743)

> We are standing here on the same ground as those theorists . . . who consider the essential element of the community to be a "*feeling of togetherness*," or an *inner unification* [*inneren Einigung*]. Every social configuration that exhibits such an inner unification, and only those configurations are, in our opinion, communities. Only in communities can one really speak about shared experiences, actions, goals, aspirations, desires, etc. (in contrast to similar or related experiences, actions, etc. that can be present in societal relations).
>
> (Walther 1923: 33)

In her analysis, Walther refers to and largely agrees with Scheler's distinction between experiential sharing on one hand and empathy, sympathy, and emotional contagion on the other. Empathically to grasp the experiences of the other is quite different from sharing his experiences. In empathy, I grasp the other's experiences insofar as they are expressed in words, gestures, bodily postures, facial expressions, etc. Throughout, I am aware that

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it is not I who am living through these experiences, but that they belong to the other, that they are the other's experiences, and that they are only given to me qua expressive phenomena (Walther 1923: 73). Even if by coincidence we were to have the same kind of experience, this would not amount to a shared experience, to an experience *we* were undergoing *together*. Despite the similarity of the two experiences, they would not be unified in the requisite manner, but would simply stand side by side as belonging to distinct individuals (Walther 1923: 74). To feel sympathy for somebody, to be happy because he is happy or sad because he is sad, also differs from being happy or sad *together* with the other (Walther 1923: 76–7). Finally, we also need to distinguish experiential sharing from emotional contagion. In the latter case, I might take over the experience of somebody else and come to experience it as my own. Insofar as that happens, however, and insofar as I then no longer have any awareness of the other's involvement, it has nothing to do with a shared experience. When an experience is shared, each partner is not only conscious of the other's experiencing, but identifies with and incorporates the other's perspective: "Communal experiences [*Gemeinschaftserlebnisse*] in our sense . . . are definitely *only* those experiences that emerge *in me* from them and *in them* from me, from *us* . . . on the basis of my unification [*Einigung*] with the others" (Walther 1923: 72). According to Walther, this peculiar belonging-to-me of the other's experience is what is distinctive and unique about communal we-experiences [*Gemeinschafts- und Wirerlebnisse*]. This is why the sense of ownership accompanying such experiences undergo a peculiar transformation. The joy is no longer simply experienced by me as *yours* and/or *mine*, but as *ours*, i.e., as co-owned, as one *we* are experiencing (Walther 1923: 75). The we in question is not, however, one that is behind, above, or independent of the participating individuals. The we is not an experiencing subject in its own right. Rather, we-experiences occur and are realized in and through the participating individuals (Walther 1923: 70).

The fact that a we-experience involves a certain unification or integration does not entail that it lacks internal complexity. For one, it is not enough that I feel an emotion as ours, you have to feel it as well. Moreover, I also have to be aware of your incorporation of my experiential perspective, just as you have to be aware of mine. Indeed, according (p. 744) to Walther, the following elements must be present: (1) the experience of A is directed at an object, (1a) the experience of B is directed at the same object. (2) A empathically grasps the experience of B, (2a) just as B empathically grasps the initial experience of A. (3) A unifies with the empathically grasped experience of B, just as (3a) B unifies with the empathically grasped experience of A. (4) Finally, A empathically grasps B's unification with A's experience, (4a) just as B empathically grasps A's unification with B's experience. Only once this complex structure of interlocked acts of iterative empathy is in place does an affect qualify as a shared emotion (Walther 1923: 85).[6]

According to Walther, the direct awareness of and interaction with others allows for a special kind of community, one that Walther labels purely personal communities or life communities (*rein personale Gemeinschaften* or *Lebensgemeinschaften*). In some cases, these communities are organized around the pursuit of shared external goals. In other cases, like friendships, families, and marriages, there is also a shared goal, but rather than being external, the goal is the flourishing of the community itself. Walther calls these

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forms of communities “reflexive communities” (*reflexive Gemeinschaften*) (Walther 1923: 67). But communal life cannot be restricted to such forms, since it cannot be a necessary feature of every community that all its members engage in reciprocal interaction (Walther 1923: 66, 68). In fact, people can experience themselves as members of a community, can identify with other members of the same community whom they have never met in person, and can have group experiences even if they are not temporally and spatially together. In such cases, shared objects, goals, rituals, conventions, norms etc. play a crucial role (Walther 1923: 49–50). Walther labels such (institutionalized) communities “objectual communities” (*gegenständliche Gemeinschaften*) (Walther 1923: 50). The more the community is centered around externalized factors (rather than being tied to the immediate interpersonal contact) the greater the spatiotemporal separation of the members can be (Walther 1923: 82), and the more replaceable these members will be. Consider, for instance, someone who converts to a new religion or acquires a new citizenship. Here one might identify with the new community before one starts to identify with particular individuals, and one’s relation to such individuals might at first only be qua representative group-members rather than qua unique individuals (Walther 1923: 99–100). Given that the identification with such communities might remain unreciprocated—I can identify with a certain community, although the other community members remain unaware of my existence—it is not immediately clear how Walther’s model of iterative and integrative empathy can directly elucidate the constitution of objectual communities. However, she would in all likelihood argue that the latter communities are founded upon personal communities, and to that extent indirectly depend upon a web of empathic intentionalities.

In a further step, Walther explores the question of whether members of a community must necessarily realize or recognize this membership. As she points out, there is a difference between identifying with and being united with certain other people, and (p. 745) knowing that one belongs to a particular community. It often happens that one lives together with others in a reciprocal unity without reflecting on this relation. But this can change, for instance, because of intergroup conflict. Thus, as Walther remarks, war can often make people aware of themselves as members of a special community (1923: 96). Only then is a community constituted as a community *for itself* in the full sense (1923: 97). Finally, Walther also discusses the case where a community isn’t simply recognized as such by its own members, but also by members belonging to another community. When that happens, and especially if the out-group members in question are representatives of, and act in the name of, their own community, one might talk of a higher-order interaction between communities. Walther suggests that the community through this kind of external recognition acquires a new and more objective status (1923: 121).

37.4 Husserl on Reciprocal Empathy and Social Acts

Whereas Husserl’s engagement with the question of intersubjectivity was initially focused on the analysis of empathy, his continuing wrestling with the issue of intersubjectivity

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eventually led him beyond this narrow focus. It would lead beyond the confines of this chapter to engage in a more extensive analysis of Husserl's later reflections on, say, the importance of generativity, the difference between a natural and cultural community, or on the relation between homeworld and alien world as found for instance in *Husserliana* 15 and 39 (Steinbock 1995). So let me instead discuss some themes that figures prominently in two intriguing texts from 1921 and 1932 entitled *Gemeingeist I* (Husserl 1973b: 165–84), and *Phänomenologie der Mitteilungsgemeinschaft* (Husserl 1973c: 461–79) respectively, and which might be seen as elucidating further the process of identification also referred to by Walther.

Initially, Husserl discusses how we can imitate another, or love or hate another, or empathically experience another, and then writes that none of these acts amounts to truly social acts (Husserl 1973b: 165–6). Why not? Because truly social acts are acts that must be apprehended by the addressee (Reinach 1913: 705–18). They involve a special kind of reciprocity. As Husserl further argues, if we consider a situation where I directly experience another, just as he experiences me, does that then suffice for the required reciprocity? Husserl's answer is negative. Each of us could simultaneously be directed at the other without any of us being aware of the other's attention, and as long as that mutual awareness were lacking, we wouldn't have a proper primordially social (*ursozialen*) I-thou relation (Husserl 1973b: 171). In fact, even a case of reciprocal empathy that involves mutual awareness will still not suffice for the kind of social unification that the I–thou connection exemplifies, and which Husserl further insists is the condition of possibility for a we-unity. As he explains in *Erste Philosophie II* (from 1923–4):

(p. 746)

> A peculiar and very important instance of the kind of empathic experience, where the other is given to me as somebody who on his part is grasping another, is the case where I myself am co-experienced as this further subject, and where this indirect empathic experience coincides with my own self-experience. In this situation, I experience my counterpart as being experientially directed at myself. On the basis of this most fundamental form of being-there-*for-one-another*-reciprocally the most disparate *I–Thou*-acts and *We-acts* become possible.
>
> (Husserl 1959: 136–7)

Being-for-one-another (*Füreinander-dasein*) in and through reciprocal empathy, i.e., being mutually aware of being attended to by the other is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for social communalization (*sozial Vergemeinschaftet-sein*) (Husserl 1973c: 471–2). What more is needed? The second-personal address: "What is still missing is the intention and will to intimate—the specific act of communication (of communicating oneself), the community creating act that in Latin is simply called *communicatio*" (Husserl 1973c: 473).

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In *Gemeingeist I*, one can find further thoughts on this, since Husserl there talks of the I–thou relation as involving a communicative engagement. Both of us, you and I, "look each other in the eyes," you understand me, are aware of me, just as I am simultaneously aware of you. I then address you and seek to influence you. For instance, I might call your attention to a common object by pointing at it. If successful, your attention will shift from my expression to the intended object. In this way, my intention is realized in you (Husserl 1973b: 167–8). Socio-communicative acts involve reciprocity *(Wechselbeziehung*) and lead to a we-synthesis if the intentions interlock in the requisite way (*Willensverflechtung*) (Husserl 1973b: 170). What is distinctive about the I–thou relation, in short, is that I does not simply stand next to the other, rather I motivate you, just as you motivate me, and through this reciprocal interaction, through various social acts, a unity of willing is established that encompasses both subjects (Husserl 1973b: 171):

> I am not merely for myself, and the other is not standing opposed to me as an other, rather the other is my you, and speaking, listening, responding, we already form a we, that is unified and communalized in a particular manner.
>
> (Husserl 1973c: 476)

As Husserl consequently makes clear, something momentous happens the moment I turn toward and start to address the other as a you. Relating to the other not simply as an other, but as a you, is simultaneously to be aware of oneself in the accusative as attended to or addressed by the other. This is why Husserl argues that I come to attain personal self-consciousness, and become a personal subject, in the I–thou relation (Husserl 1973b: 171). *Socialization* (being constituted as full-fledged social beings) and *communalization* (being constituted as a member of a social group and a community) are for Husserl two sides of the same process, as Szanto correctly points out (Szanto 2016: 148). Why should Husserl hold such a thesis? Well, as Husserl explains in a central passage in *Ideen II*, when I take over the apprehension that others have of me, when I come to be in possession of such a socially mediated externalized self-apprehension, (p. 747) "*I fit myself into the family of man,* or, rather, I create the constitutive possibility for the unity of this 'family.' It is only now that I am, in the proper sense, an Ego over against an other and can then say 'we' " (Husserl 1989: 254).

As I interpret Husserl, his guiding idea is that any we-formation, on the one hand, necessarily requires a preservation of plurality. On the other hand, if the difference between self and other is too salient, it will prevent the required sense of togetherness. To adopt a we-perspective and group-identify, to come to think of and experience oneself as *one of us*, consequently requires that the difference between self and others is somewhat downplayed. This is what happens when one comes to experience and adopt the other's perspective on oneself. It is no coincidence that Husserl occasionally describes this process as amounting to a form of self-alienation (*Selbstentfremdung*) (Husserl 1973c: 634–5).[7]

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37.5 Gurwitsch on Partnership and Communal Membership

Let me end my survey by taking a closer look at some themes in Gurwitsch's Habilitation *Die mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Milieuwelt* where he, on the one hand, engages with themes already explored by Scheler and Walther, but, on the other hand, also advocates what ultimately amounts to an alternative phenomenological approach to community.[8]

Like Scheler and Walther before him, Gurwitsch discusses a variety of different social formations and initially distinguishes what he calls *partnership* from (communal) *membership.* For Gurwitsch, the partnership is a kind of instrumental and strategic association (Gurwitsch 1979: 117). The relation of the partners is determined by the situation at hand, and their understanding of each other is "provided by the setting of the things" (Gurwitsch 1979: 105). The partners consequently do not encounter each other as specific individuals, but precisely as (substitutable) partners who are defined and exhausted by the role they play (Gurwitsch 1979: 104, 108, 112). Their relation is consequently somewhat external. The partners are not related to each other independently of the specific situation in which they engage and they remain, as Gurwitsch remarks, "alien to one another" (Gurwitsch 1979: 118). This detached form of interpersonal relation is then contrasted with the communal being-together which, for Gurwitsch, is characterized by a different kind of unity and belonging. His distinction consequently mirrors the distinction between society and community. But how do we get from one to the other? This is where Gurwitsch takes issue with Walther's account. As I explained above, Walther (p. 748) took the feeling of inner unification and togetherness to be the decisive ingredient that is present in community but absent in society. One difficulty with this proposal, however, is that it seems to imply that the only difference between community and society is the presence of a certain supervening positive emotional dimension. In both cases, the underlying structure remains exactly the same. Gurwitsch criticizes this proposal and argues that one should recognize not only that partnerships can sometimes occur accompanied by positive feelings, but also that a community is not necessarily threatened or undermined in cases where conflicts or feuds take the place of positive sentiments. Membership in a community can persist even when negative interpersonal emotions are present. We should consequently reject the proposal that the presence of positive feelings is constitutive of communal membership (Gurwitsch 1979: 121–2). But, if a feeling of togetherness is not what constitutes a community qua community, what is then decisive? For Gurwitsch the essential factor is the presence of a shared tradition (Gurwitsch 1979: 122).

Whereas partnerships can be voluntarily initiated and discontinued, one is born into and brought up within a community, and this communal membership is not something from which one can voluntarily dissociate oneself (Gurwitsch 1979: 124). In fact, it is quite beyond the domain of personal will and decision. This is also why, according to Gurwitsch, the being-together in the dimension of the community is not a being-together of individu-

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als qua particular individuals, but qua community members (Gurwitsch 1979: 130). Those with whom one is communally joined have not been selected by free choice based on their personal qualities, but rather based on a shared heritage. Communalization is consequently essentially historical. Our membership in a community determines the way we understand both the world and ourselves and provides us with a deep rootedness in a context that is taken for granted. When members of a community encounter each other, this encounter is informed and shaped by their shared communal possession. This is also why the relation between members of a community is unlike the relation between partners in a work situation. In the latter case, the individuals have their identity prior to engaging in a partnership. In the former case, by contrast, the comprehensive life-context and historicality precede the actual being-together, for which reason the whole might be said to be prior to the parts (Gurwitsch 1979: 132).

Towards the end of his book, Gurwitsch also briefly explores the character of a third social formation, namely the fusional (sectarian) group, where a group of followers are gripped by a common idea and the charismatic power of their leader, and come to feel united as "one" (Gurwitsch 1979: 141–2). It is surprising though that Gurwitsch nowhere in his analysis discusses types of social formations that preserve and cherish the individuality of the members, such as friendships. As should be amply clear from what has already been said, however, Gurwitsch obviously takes issue with an idea, central to the other thinkers previously discussed, namely that bodily expressivity and dyadic face-to-face encounters play a foundational role in the constitution of sociality and community.

(p. 749) 37.6 Conclusion

A feature common to Husserl, Scheler, and Walther (as well as Stein and later Schutz) is that the investigation of the dyadic empathic encounter figures prominently in their analysis of we-intentionality and experiential sharing. On their view, a proper account of our communal being-together requires an exploration of how individuals are experientially interrelated. We just saw how Gurwitsch questioned this approach. A few years earlier, however, an even more pronounced criticism had already been articulated by Heidegger. In *Sein und Zeit* as well as in lecture courses from around that period, including *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (1925), *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (1927), and *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1928–9), Heidegger spoke out against empathy and denied its epistemological and ontological primacy. Not only did he consider the very attempt empathically to grasp the experiences of others to be an exception rather than the default mode of our being-with-others. He also took the very suggestion that a bridge or connection had to be established between two initially independent selves, an I and a thou, to involve a fundamental misunderstanding. There is no gap to be bridged by empathy, since a basic constituent of Dasein's being-in-the-world is its being-with:

> Dasein is essentially *being-with* others *as being-among* intraworldly beings. As being-in-the-world it is never first merely being among things extant within the world, then subsequently to uncover other human beings as also being among

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> them. Instead, as being-in-the-world it is being with others, apart from whether and how others are factically there with it themselves. On the other hand, however, the Dasein is also not first merely being-with others, only then later to run up against intraworldly things in its being-with-others; instead, being-with-others means being-with other being-in-the-world—being-with-in-the-world . . . Put otherwise, being-in-the-world is with equal originality both being-with and being-among.
>
> (Heidegger 1982: 278)

As Heidegger insisted, one problem with earlier empathy theorists was that they had failed to realize to what extent the very notion of empathy (*Einfühlung*) is committed to a problematic ontological assumption. The assumption is that the I is at first at home in its own ego-sphere and must then subsequently exit that sphere and enter the sphere of the other in order to establish a connection. This is all wrong, however, since Dasein is already from the start outside, and that is also where it encounters the other (Heidegger 2001: 145). In addition, the empathy theorists had failed to grasp to what extent empathy rather than constituting our being-with is first possible on its basis (Heidegger 1996: 117), or as Heidegger writes in *Einleitung in die Philosophie*:

> The With-one-another [*Miteinander*] cannot be explained through the I–Thou relation, but rather conversely: this I–Thou relation presupposes for its inner possibility that Dasein functioning as I and also as Thou is determined as with-one-another; (p. 750) indeed even more: even the self-comprehension of an I and the concept of I-ness arise only on the basis of the with-one-another, not from the I–Thou relation.
>
> (Heidegger 2001: 145–6)

In a lecture from 1934, Heidegger went on to reject the equation of self and I (Heidegger 2009: 34). Rather, selfhood is something that can also be ascribed to the we. And the very question Who are we? is in his view a timely question, since I-time, the time of liberalism, has now (i.e., in the Germany of the thirties) been replaced by we-time. There are, however, many ways in which people can come together, from a nameless and revolting mass, to a bowling team or a band of robbers (Heidegger 2009: 45). But as long as we think simply of the we as a plurality, as an "assembly of individual human beings" (Heidegger 2009: 55), or as a "multitude of separate Is" (Heidegger 2009: 34) we will definitely not have grasped what a genuine community is (Heidegger 2009: 45). A more radical investigation of who we are will make us realize that "our self-being is the *Volk*" (Heidegger 2009: 50). As Heidegger then goes on to argue, the *Volk* doesn't come about because several independent subjects agree to found a community. Rather, the *Volk* possesses an original vocational unity "that has been consigned to it as heritage and assigned to it as a destiny" (Crowell 2018: 245) and it is on its basis that individuals can come to experience themselves as individuals (Heidegger 2009: 130). Whether or not we belong to the *Volk* is consequently not up to us. Rather it is always already decided, based on our history and descent (Heidegger 2009: 50, 72). Indeed, for Heidegger the national community [*Volks-*

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gemeinschaft] is an ethnic-cultural unity rooted in the forces of blood and soil (Heidegger 2000: 132, 151).

One might have profound concerns about the political implications of this view, just as one might question whether Heidegger's treatment of empathy does justice to the discussions of his phenomenological predecessors, but whatever the case, Heidegger's own approach was certainly not universally endorsed by subsequent phenomenologists. In *Totalité et infini,* Levinas attacks Heidegger for offering a totalizing account that fails to respect and appreciate the alterity and difference of the other (Levinas 1969: 45–6, 67–8, 89). A somewhat similar criticism can also be found in Sartre's *L'être et le néant*. Sartre argued that Heidegger's attempt to downplay the importance of the face-to-face encounter and his insistence on the extent to which our everyday being-with-one-another is characterized by anonymity and substitutability—as Heidegger famously wrote, the others are those among whom one is, but from whom "one mostly does *not* distinguish oneself" (Heidegger 1996: 111)—made Heidegger lose sight of the real nexus of intersubjectivity: the encounter and confrontation with *radical otherness* (Sartre 2003: 271–3).

As these brief references should make clear, the phenomenological debate about the foundations of sociality did not end with the contributions of Heidegger and Gurwitsch. The question of whether second-person engagement and dyadic face-to-face encounters have priority over more anonymous and communal forms of being-with-others continued up through the twentieth century. A proper treatment of the post-war discussion is a topic for another time.

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Notes:

([1]) For two recent edited volumes that also target and discuss the contributions of, for instance, Reinach, Stein, Löwith, and Hildebrand, see Szanto and Moran 2016, and Salice and Schmid 2016.

([2]) I have previously written on and discussed these authors in separate publications. My discussion in the following will partially draw on material found in Zahavi 2014, Zahavi 2016, León and Zahavi 2016, and Zahavi and Salice 2017.

([3]) For a comparison of Husserl and Scheler and for a more elaborate presentation of Husserl’s and Scheler’s theories of interpersonal understanding, see Zahavi 2014.

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([4]) Schloßberger has recently insisted on the difference between *Nachfühlen* and empathy and instead proposed to translate *Nachfühlen* as “sensing.” As he argues, *Nachfühlen* does not involve some (unconscious) inferential “putting oneself in another’s shoes,” but is rather the immediate experience of the (expressive) other as other (2016: 180–2). I agree with the latter definition, but see no reason to stay clear of the term “empathy,” since other phenomenologists, in contrast to Lipps, precisely understood empathy very much in the same way as Scheler conceived of *Nachfühlen*. It is revealing that several of them, Husserl included, referred to Scheler’s theory precisely as a theory of empathy (Husserl 1960: 147, Walther 1923: 17).

([5]) The book was initially published in 1913 under the title *Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Hass*, but Scheler changed the name of the second edition, which was substantially reworked and doubled in size.

([6]) For a more extensive discussion of Walther’s rather complicated model, see León and Zahavi 2016.

([7]) For a fuller development of this interpretation, see Zahavi 2016.

([8]) The manuscript was completed in 1932, but due to the political circumstances, Gurwitsch was unable to actually habilitate (he left Germany in 1933) and the book was only published in German in 1976.

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