Chapter 12
Joining the Background: Habitual Sentiments Behind We-Intentionality

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Abstract How can the inner structure of we-intentionality be described? The early phenomenological account of Gerda Walther (Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaft. In: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, vol 6. Niemeyer, Halle, pp 1–158, 1923) offers interesting insights into the nature of human sociality: according to her we-intentionality is embedded in a network of intentional habits a network that shapes individual minds. She claims that the core of community is grounded in a concrete, intentional background that arises through a particular structure of affective intentionality: habitual joining.

In Walther's approach, the core of the We is pre-reflexive and non-thematic and it is formed in habits through a web of conscious and unconscious sentiments of joining. This us-background, a non-reducible basic level of community, is a necessary condition for actual we-intentionality. Common intentionality can therefore neither be understood as involving a unique super-individual bearer, nor simply as a habit shared by multiple individuals—it is a web of intentional relations between individuals with which several habits are linked.

In Walther's work we find no monological conception of intentionality, but a relational, interpersonal account of mind. A fresh look at her account could free the current debate from old prejudices concerning the phenomenological concept of intentionality. There is no preconstituted subjectivity that joins the community: in habitual joining, subjects and community reciprocally form each other.

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1 Introduction

The task of this chapter is to present Gerda Walther's theory of community, and to situate it within the contemporary debate about collective intentionality. Gerda Walther (1897–1977) wrote *Zur Ontologie der Sozialen Gemeinschaft* in 1921 as a Ph.D. dissertation under the supervision of the Munich phenomenologist Alexander Pfänder. The text was published in 1923 in the phenomenological *Jahrbuch* edited by Edmund Husserl, for whom she also prepared the index of his *Ideas I* (Hua III/1, pp. 360–427), the work that ratified the "transcendental turn" of Husserl in the eyes of his students. Those who did not accept the transcendental frame of Husserl's constitution theory declared themselves *realistic* phenomenologists and rested on the project of descriptive ontology and psychology. Walther herself chose Pfänder as her supervisor because she felt more acquainted with his realistic approach than with the methodologies Husserl was still working out during her studies in Freiburg (Walther 1960, p. 244).[1] Walther's "unusually fruitful and suggestive" account (Spiegelberg 1994, p. 188) has only recently been discovered and discussed (Schmid 2005, 2009; Schmid and Schweikard 2009) thanks to the growing interest that realistic phenomenology has aroused in the last few decades within the research on the social frame of intentionality. After a century of mutual misunderstandings, we are finally seeing an exciting though not scorn-free rapprochement and exchange between the analytic and phenomenological traditions both in terms of thematic approaches and conceptual tools (De Monticelli 2011).

Within the reassessment of formal ontology and descriptive psychology spearheaded by the Seminar for Austro-German-Philosophy, an important bridge was built between the two traditions in the revaluation of Reinach's account of social acts through a comparison with contemporary speech act theory (Mulligan 1987). From both sides of the twentieth-century ideal "philosophical ocean", social ontology is nowadays recognized as being embedded in the tradition of early phenomenology (Salice 2011).

As collective intentionality analyses were for a long time limited to strictly practical and cognitive intentionality, the current rediscovery of empathy and affective states in cognitive sciences and philosophy of mind has brought renewed attention to the realistic phenomenological approach to emotional life and its relevance for both social cognition and social ontology (Thompson 2001; Zahavi 2001; Schmid 2005; Vendrell Ferran 2008). Concurrently, scholars who overcame firmly rooted prejudices about the role of embodiment and intersubjectivity in Husserl's constitution theory (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008) deeply enriched the frame of the "en-active approach" (Varela et al. 1991) integrating phenomenology and the cognitive sciences. In all these trends we are seeing a shift from an individualistic toward an embodied and socially embedded approach.

[1] In 1923, she also released an enquiry on mystics and additionally she published on psychiatry and parapsychology, being progressively ostracized by the scientific community because of her disconcerting interest in occultism (Lopez McAllister 1995).

Against this scientific background, I want to situate Walther's theory of community within the current debate on collective intentionality. Since the seminal works of Miller and Tuomela (1988) and Searle (1990), the core of the discussion has been the mereological value of collective intentionality. My claim is that Walther's tricky but fruitful strategy could represent a "Copernican Turn" in social theory (as cited in Schmid 2009, p. 43). But first we must clarify the *enhanced concept of intentionality* that phenomenology offers (Hua III/1, § 115). Despite the rigid division between realistic and Husserlian phenomenologies, we can profit from her account only if we understand it as mid-point between those of Pfänder and Husserl, i.e. in-between the analytic-realistic and the transcendental-constitutive approaches. Determining how to situate Walther's account among other theories of collective intentionality depends much more on the understanding of intentionality one endorses than the mereology one commits to.

It is a given that intentionality refers to the relation between mind and world. However, this still leaves open how one should describe intentionality. Both Pfänder and Husserl focused on the peculiar *directedness* of different ways of conscious life, developing the descriptive approach to intentionality initiated by Brentano (1874). If we live directed *toward* the world, i.e. in striving or in attentive perception or explicit thought, intentionality manifests itself as *centrifugal*. By contrast, we are subject to *centripetal* tendencies if we are *affected* by something, if we experience something as demanding our attention, and if we are guided by the implicit affordances of the environment. We can find centripetal and centrifugal intentionality in all three main classes of intentional life: the cognitive, the conative, and the emotive sphere.

Intentionality concerns, therefore, the whole experience of *directed life*, the driving and the driven one. What one grasps or is grasped by is not the content of an inner "intentional state" that is related to the outside, but rather the source or goal of this lived relation.

In phenomenological terms, there can be no succession of mental states without a motivational structure that links them. An abrupt noise motivates, for example, the shift of attention; its content can further motivate an attentive perception if one switches to a contemplative stance looking at the rain through the window; or a required problem-solving action if one realizes that the window is wide open; or, more cheerlessly a sentiment of begrudgement at the prospect of yet another dreary weekend. As this shows, a single intentional state can acquire its sense only within a framework of motivations. Despite this vividly differentiated account of mental life that Husserl shared with the phenomenological circles, since his "transcendental turn" he has often been accused of being a representationalist and therefore of falling victim to a monological, solipsistic account of intentionality. These striking criticisms emerged from amidst the misunderstandings and rivalries that increasingly took place within the phenomenological movement in the tragic times that began in 1914. They gave rise to interpretational problems that could only be eventually resolved through the careful study of Husserl's larger body of work in the elephantine edition of the Husserliana (Hua), that began 1950 and

is still in progress. The aim of his lifelong research was the in-depth descriptive examination of intentional structures as *correlations* of thinking and thought, i.e. of experiencing subjectivity and experienced objectivity. In the *Logical Investigations* he had already begun an analysis of correlation structures of acts of representation and conceptual cognition. Step by step, the subject of this activity came to the fore. While at first logical structures were analyzed "monologically", i.e. in the inner speech of the cognitive subject (Hua XIX/1, p. 41), gradually the analysis reached the pre-categorical level and, finally, the intentional network that interweaves both intra-subjective and inter-subjective life (Zahavi 2001).

His transcendental turn, i.e. his tricky methodology of progressive reductions, was not conceived to escape reality and sociality, but to understand more deeply *how* we experience them within incessantly developing and never-ending differentiating intentional frames (Lohmar 2002).

For their part, realistic phenomenologists continued to describe different aspects of intentional reference to the world, focusing either on the psychological structure or the constant features of related intentional objects, without paying much attention to the dynamic interdependence of intentional correlations that obsessed Husserl (Hua VI, p. 169). Their psychological and ontological essays fell into obscurity and still remain like a "sunken continent", ready to be explored by both theoretical psychology and social ontology (De Monticelli 2000). The revaluation of this tradition is still in its infancy and can contribute greatly to the current debate. In this regard, no one has yet paid due attention to the relevance of Husserl's constitution theory for such topical questions as: How do we construct social reality? How can mind-dependent objects be better understood? To be sure, this research program reaches far beyond the limited aims of the present study. Nevertheless, as Husserl pointed out, in order to fulfill constitutional research within the intersubjective frame of the life-world, one needs a deeper analysis of the social web of intentional structures. This is what he called the way to constitutive analysis through the "new-born" (Hua XXX, p. 286) intentional psychology and sociology (Hua VIII, p. 108). If only one were to bracket the old, unfruitful polemic between realistic and idealistic metaphysics and provide a more sympathetic account of phenomenology as a (differentiated) whole then both analytic and phenomenological social ontology could be framed within Husserl's intentional analysis.

Bearing in mind this historical scientific background I will try to introduce Walther's work in terms accessible to contemporary readers, placing it between Husserl's constitutive approach and the realistic approach of Pfänder's psychology.

Walther's key concept is "*habitual joining*" (*habituelle Einigung*). In order to understand it properly, I shall first introduce Husserl's phenomenological understanding of habits (Sect. 2.1) and present Pfänder's analysis of the act of joining (Sect. 2.2). It will then be possible to present the three ontological levels of Walther's theory: Non-thematic concrete background (Sect. 3.1), we-experiences against us-background (Sect. 3.2), and acts *in the name of* the community (Sect. 3.3).

2 Habitual Joining

Walther's understanding of intentionality is indebted to both Pfänder's and Husserl's accounts. She develops the concept of *habitual joining* on the basis of Pfänder's essays *Zur Psychologie der Gesinnungen* (1913/1916). Pfänder claims that there are three principal modes of being directed toward objects: in actual, potential, and habitual psychic experiences (*seelische Erlebnisse*). He complains that psychology entirely overlooks the potential and habitual modes in taking these simply to consist in hypothetically deduced nonconscious, pre-intentional dispositions to actual life (Pfänder 1913, p. 332). However, his own analysis of the act of joining did itself not go beyond the frame of actual-present joining (*aktuelle Einigung*). It was Husserl who, from 1917, began to develop an original analysis of *habitual intentionality* and who, in 1920, encouraged Walther to work on the concept of *habitus* (HuDok 3.2, p. 259).

2.1 Habitus in Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology

The concept of "*habituality*" is the key to Husserl's *genetic* account of phenomenology (Bernet et al. 1996, p. 185). The heart of the genetic approach consists in the methodological description of the ways in which intentional structures are acquired. It focuses on the dynamics through which every intentional network arises. Topics of genetic analysis are, for example: the cognitive operations that allow pairs and configurations to arise (*Paarung*); the way in which embodiment takes place in the simultaneous acquisition of bodily capabilities and the increasing enrichment of the environment as a horizon of affordances; or the complex intentional webs that emerge in the encounter with other subjects.

According to this genetic approach, every intentional act arises not only on the basis of an intentional "*horizon*" but also against a "*background*" of experience which produces intentional habits and provides the frames through which every new experience of the same type can be anticipated.

Saying that every intentional act is embedded in a *horizon* means that the mind has no atomic structure: every intentional experience implies a focus and a situated network of potential links that frame it. Thanks to this implicit holistic frame, the intentional content is meaningfully enriched. For example, depending on the implicit situation, one may be inclined to experience a shape *as* a real person (if one is entering the lobby of a hotel) or *as* a sculpture (if one is entering an art exhibition). Maybe in the hotel there is actually a hyper-realistic sculpture, but one does not *expect* it there. Anticipation is one strong shaping moment of the horizon: we experience much more than what we *actually presently* intend, since every intentional object is embedded in a network of potentialities motivated by the content and the modal quality of the act.

Every act further tends to leave behind meaningful marks of its execution in the form of *habitus*. The more one gets acquainted with typical structures of one's experience, the more one *feels familiar* with them (Husserl 1973, p. 123). The intentional network that frames every situation is not only shaped by attitudes and expectations, but also every experience leaves its mark. The expanding knot of meanings related to an intentional content develops into a framework through which every *token* of this *type* will be experienced. This meaningful framework is the intentional *schema* that configures every new encounter with similar objects or situations (Lohmar 2008, p. 103). Husserl calls such schemas "*types*" and the process of their development "*typification*". He defines types as a form of habitus, because, as any other habitual structure, types present an *enactive* moment, i.e. a punctual act that enacts this structure (*Urstiftung*), that is maintained in force and can be reenacted through endorsement or expire once it is given up. Mental life is therefore characterized as a never-ending dynamic of typification, i.e. sedimentation of experienced intentional networks in habitual structures that can be "aroused" in encounters with similar objects.

If I experience 'a cat on the mat', I apprehend it in a particular present perspective that is embedded in a network of potentialities relating to the content 'a cat on the mat'. Once I experience the cat on the mat, I enact the position: 'There is a cat on the mat'. If in the course of that same experience I come to judge that there is no real cat on the mat, but actually only a toy cat, it is because the later parts of the experience contradict the potentialities that were embedded in the intentional structures related to the matter of fact 'a cat on the mat', and force me to change the modal quality of my act from 'There is a cat on a mat.' to 'Is that actually a cat on a mat?'. I will move toward it, testing all the potentialities that should belong to 'a cat on the mat'. If new experiences are no longer meaningfully linked with 'a cat on the mat', i.e. are no longer embedded in its network of motivated potentiality, for example if the cat has a label with "made in China" written upon it, I will suddenly switch the whole intentional network: 'Aha! It isn't a cat, it is a toy!' The position of the state of affairs 'a cat on the mat' expires and another contrary one is enacted: 'a toy on the mat'.

It is important not to overlook the emotional dynamic linked to these processes: becoming acquainted with typical structures of the environment does not safeguard one from embarrassments. Once a sufficient number of types are sedimented, one is exonerated from the mental fatigue that every novel encounter requires. One can rely on one's habits and live in acquainted situations through routines. In the process of becoming acquainted one feels that mental fatigue is diminishing. To *feel familiar* with acquainted structures one has acquired therefore means that one is emotionally discharged from the tensions and distresses that come with unknown horizons. The explosion of an intentional network through the negation of an acquainted framework leads to emotional distresses and embarrassments. One has to be attentive to any sign that could recreate order, switching to another meaningful network re-enacting sedimented structures or trying to get acquainted with the new situation. All these processes are tied to emotional states and dynamics. In extreme cases, if an order can't be restored, it can also lead to panic or emotional

disorders. To summarize, every act-fulfillment enlarges the domain of potentialities with new contents and every new experience enriches the *types* through which one can experience the *tokens* of the world. Actual experience brings into play these frames, not only in order to make a token's potentialities explicit, but also in order to structure its horizon through meaningful anticipations. The enrichment of these frames is a process of *habitualization* or *typification*: an intentional habit is a concrete knot of sedimented experiences that will guide each new apprehension of a similar type. Experiences do not simply disappear; they leave traces of their occurrence. These traces *sediment* themselves and become stable ground for further experiences, motivating fantasies, actions, or expectations that drive further perceptions, and so on.

Husserl and Pfänder describe the web of potential and habitual intentionality that surrounds every intended content as the "*background*" against which the subject experiences that content. The term 'background' refers not only to the formal structure of consciousness "*foreground/background*", which was explored by the *Gestaltpsychologie*, it also refers to intentional contents, since it describes the meaningful network of experiences sedimented in the subject's history. Intentionality is not only an actual state of the mind, it forms the subject itself; it is its very nature. It is its past in the form of habits in the background. It is its future, in the form of excitable potentialities that enact the affordances of its environment. It can be vividly experienced in fantasies and realized in actions. This *background* is therefore not a hypothesis about some non-intentional functions, it is an intentional structure articulated according to an intentional modality (*habituality*) that we can directly experience.

We do need a model of such a background in order to understand the mind but we can avoid reducing it to a neurophysiological desideratum as Searle does (1992, 1995). Certainly, the study of the background also involves what Husserl called the "nature-side" of the psyche: appetites, tendencies, drives (Hua IV). But all these phenomena can be experienced, and should be described as, lived ones, as embodied mental life, before one accepts the challenge to substantialize them, i.e. to naturalize them in the form of a causal mechanism.

In conclusion, thanks to the genetic approach to intentionality, phenomenology points out that subjectivity has two essential features:

- It is the intentional pole of centripetal *affection* and centrifugal *action*;
- It is the bearer of gradually evolving systems of *habitualized intentionality*, articulated in its background.

2.2 "Joining" in Pfänder's Theory of Gesinnung

So far, we have seen how the understanding of intentionality is enhanced in the tradition of phenomenology by the formal distinctions of actual, potential, and habitual modes of intentional life. These distinctions are related to the concepts

of horizon and background and their inherent motivational structure. We saw these features at work in the process of typification that intentionality undergoes, according to Husserl. We also saw how the dynamics of acquaintance involve the emotional polarity of familiarity and befuddlement. These emotional states are side effects of the intentional cognitive operations of acquaintance, however they do not have an intentional character of their own. It is therefore important to contrast emotions with other kinds of feelings that do possess intentional features and play a central role in Walther's own account. We shall call them sentiments, as opposed to emotions.

The task of Pfänder's essays *Zur Psychologie der Gesinnungen* (1913/1916) was to give a systematic analysis of the structures of those feelings which were indicated by the German word *Gesinnung*. Lessing coined this term in order to translate the use of the French term *sentiment* in the eighteenth century, and it has had an impressive role in the German culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was used by Goethe, Kant, Herder, Hegel, and Fichte to describe a deep structure of personality, between will, sensitivity, and conviction, in opposition to caprice, sensible feelings, and mere opinions. Weber contrasted a deontological ethics of belief (*Gesinnungsethik*) with a consequentialist ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*). The word *Gesinnung* became part of a slogan used for Nazi propaganda, and it has since fallen out of common use.

Hume's understanding of *moral sentiments*, which by the way stems from the same French root, has some kinship with the tradition of the German *Gesinnung*. Nowadays, the computational study of opinions, sentiments, and emotions in virtual statements (in social networks, user commentaries, etc.) is called "Sentiment Analysis" and explores some phenomena that were peripherally discussed by Pfänder. As we will see, sentiments tend to activate dispositional attitudes, but I would prefer to avoid translating *Gesinnung* either with "*dispositional sentiment*" or with "*dispositions*" (as is commonly done) in order to cover the broadest spectrum (i.e. to address actual, potential, and habitual sentiments) and to stress the intentional and rational features of this class of feelings, rather than their effects. For these reasons I translate *Gesinnung* as "*sentiment*".

According to Pfänder's definition, sentiments are not states, but *intentional feelings*. Their essential feature is manifested in their *positive* or *negative* polarity. Positive sentiments include for example love, friendship, sympathy, and favour; negative sentiments include hatred, enmity, antipathy, and disfavour.

The intentional structure of a fully developed sentiment has three different levels. From a developmental perspective each level *tends* to arise out of one of the more basic levels, but one can learn to control each autonomously. They are:

1. Affect (*Erregung*): Positive excitation/Negative excitation (positive/negative *Regung*);
2. Position-taking (*Stellungnahme*): Joining/Separating (*Einigung/Sonderung*);
3. Attitude (*Haltung*): Approval/Disapproval (*Bejahung/Verneinung*).

1. The first level is that of affect: it can be a positive or negative motion toward something or someone; for example a reactive expression of anger toward the car driver honking at me, or a feeling of sympathy for someone.

2. A centrifugal act of position-*taking* (*Stellungnahme*) toward the intentional object of the affect can arise if one follows it, moving to the object of sympathy, e.g. seeking contact with it. If one establishes contact, one *joins* it. Joining (*Einigung*) is an intentional sentiment of bonding, motivated by a positive affective disposition toward somebody or something. *To be* joined ("Einig*sein*") is not to be confused with *the feeling* of being bonded ("Einigungs*gefühl*"). On the other hand, if one establishes intentional contact with the object of a negative affect one will try to *maintain* or *increase the distance* from it through an act of *separating* (*Sondern*). In joining and separating, we bring our environment into affective relief, selecting relevant features which track ourselves and our character. Both of them model the background of the subject according to the intentional content and to the modal quality of the relation to it. Joining a mate, for example, who loves climbing doesn't mean that I will acquire his abilities, but it makes possible that, thanks to him, I will acquire some skills and some attitudes that could lead me to try to follow him in a climbing expedition. Through him I can learn to experience something which I never cared for before. Separating has positive effects, too. If I incline to separate myself from someone, I will avoid all those features which are tied together in the type that grew from the encounter with him. Furthermore, objects of joining or separating can be both persons (and animals) or inanimate objects, such as toys or luxury products, that can therefore acquire affective features (becoming animated) both in their individual and class character. Freud called "transference" the peculiar ability to transfer sentiments from one person to another, or from a person to an object. Since transferred sentiments seem to play a very important role in the development of infants' minds, because status symbols often define the social structure of adults, it remains an open task for phenomenology to analyze the intentional structure that links sentiments and transference (see Lohmar and Brudzinska 2011).

Joining and separating both influence the way my background develops, they model it constantly and, most of the time, they do so irrespective of my will. Acts of joining and separating can be divided into those which are conscious and those which are not. The intimate individuality of the person is given in the inner order of her sentiments: the less one is aware of one's sentiments, the more the background is responsive to their effects.

Through the affective relations of joining and separating one weaves one's social embedment: both joining and separating explain the relational character of the affective life that nourishes the social world. By taking a positive or negative position toward relevant phenomena of the affective environment, one reinforces the dialectical structures of relational life. Even refusing contact with someone leaves its mark upon the background of the one who is performing the separation. Refusals are carried into and influence individual life no less than fondness. Since in infancy personality is shaped within familiar sentiments, children are often told fairy tales that narrate the risks of growing up. Characters therefore are the representation in images of what children mostly live and fear: the bonding relations of caring, the fear of being refused, the monsters of loneliness, and their struggles for friendship and love. As one grows up and becomes a person, one is challenged by one's own past: the sentiments and fears that left their mark upon the background, the models

one had, the refusals one suffered, and also the characters one heard about can become a rigid framework one cannot escape or the most intimate material one has to work out.

Sentiments manifest further peculiar modal qualities, as we know from novels and films, since one can differentiate, for example, between the amour-passion that consumes the whole life of the lover—ambivalent passions that switch between positive and negative qualities—and resentments, where separating replaces joining because of refusal. Of course, blind love and hesitating favor, cold or visceral hatred, given the same intentional object, do not mark the background in the same way.

As a result of joining and separating, one attunes one's affective life to one's social environment: we can therefore speak of a kind of "*affect attunement*" (Stern 1985, p. 140). Affects become modulated through the positions one takes toward their sources, they can be strengthened or partially stifled. Affects are shaped through the affective positions one takes: motions of sympathy can increase, for example, in the presence of a person one joins, toward whom one is well-disposed. In the opposite direction, a past act of separation can snuff out any positive motion. Through the habitualization of joining and separating one shapes one's own background according to the bonding relations in which one is involved. Joining and separating establish fields of relations that become part of the life of the subjects. By joining, one attunes oneself with these relational background fields, one *joins* them and embeds one's own background within a communal, joint one.

3. Finally, one can assume a personal attitude (*Haltung*) toward the object of joining or separating, respectively approving or disapproving of its existence and its values. Second order sentiments normally call for taking a stand on their objects, while endorsements or refusals involve an inner affective recognition or rejection of the affordances with which these sentiments are coupled. Sentiments of approving and disapproving are performed by the intimate "center" of the person: they become traits of her character. By taking a stand for someone, one implicitly commits oneself to care for him. Once one takes a stand for something, one implicitly assents to it as valuable, it becomes worth one's engagement. Sentiments give access to a particular domain of practical rationality: values are namely recognized via reflection on the state of affairs *qua* state of values as given through the affective relations that these higher order sentiments shape. This is an important point in the strictly phenomenological criticism of practical reason that cannot be further developed here, but it nevertheless has enormous implications for ethics and social theories.

For the purpose of this chapter we can therefore define joining as follows: *joining is a positive intentional sentiment of bonding, motivated by a positive affective disposition towards something or somebody*.

3 Walther's Ontology of Community

Following some of Husserl's suggestions, Walther developed the idea of joining by relating it to the process of habitualization. In her view, a community is essentially grounded in the joint background that arises through habitual joining.

She distinguishes three levels of community, according to three different steps of communal intentional structures:

1. Non-thematic concrete background;
2. We-experiences against us-background;
3. Acts in the name of the community.

3.1 Non-thematic Concrete Background

Walther radicalized Pfänder's account by stressing that if the object of joining (or separating) is another subject, habitualization takes the form of an (intentional) "other *in me*", through and with whom I can experience the world (Walther 1923, p. 71).

The solution that Walther's approach to we-intentionality proposes is tricky to understand and lies in the following intuition: beyond our active, actual conscious life, we carry in the background something like "others in me". What does it mean to live with others in the background?

She describes the way we-experiences operate as follows:

> [*M*]*y* experiences are actually lived in my I-Center, they stream toward it from my consciousness-background, from my Self, in which my I is embedded. Though in this embedment, in this background, from which these lived experiences arise, I am not alone as 'myself'—in the communal lived experiences—but I have taken the others inside into the background, I intentionally received them beyond my I-Center in my Self (or they grew up in it by themselves) and I feel myself at one, I feel myself joined with them (unconsciously, automatically or because of an explicit joining). (Walther 1923, p. 71)[2]

Following Pfänder, she describes subjectivity within the polarity of the "I-Center" and the "Self". Not every intentional motion has to be performed by the I-Center; on the contrary, the I-Center is the pole only of every *centrifugal* intentional act. Intentional motions and affects can arise peripherally in the background without involving the I-Center, but the I-Center is strictly embedded within its intentional background, which is therefore called the Self. Since every experience arises against the background, it somehow has its source in the Self. Nevertheless, not every experience has to be constitutively private. In the background the Self is not alone because it is embedded in its history, which is individuated by its affective relations. The background keeps track of all joining and separating acts. The Self is

[2]"[*M*]*eine* Erlebnisse vollziehen sich aktuell in *meinem* Ichzentrum, sie strömen ihm aus meinem Bewußtseinhintergrund, meinem Selbst, in das es eingebettet ist, zu. Doch in dieser Einbettung, in diesem Hintergrund, aus dem diese Erlebnisse hervorgehen, bin nicht nur ich allein als 'ich selbst'—bei dem Gemeinschaftserlebnissen—, sondern ich habe die anderen ja mit in ihn hereingenommen, ich habe sie hinter meinem Ichzentrum in mein Selbst intentional aufgenommen (oder sie sind von selbst hineingewachsen) und ich fühle mich eins mit ihnen (unbewußt, automatisch oder auf Grund einer ausdrücklichen Einigung)."

attuned to other subjects because it has sedimented its relations with them. These counterparts are *typificated* in the background as *relational types* that can be aroused in relevant situations thrown into similar forms of affective relief.

The "others in me" were *intentionally* taken into the background, as in every typification, but they restructure the intentional network in a very radical way. Through the typification of other subjects the intentional horizon is *extruded* into the social dimension. The relational fields become incorporated in the intentional horizon, carried in the background, and held in the potentialities of the network. The concrete background therefore manifests a peculiar form of sociality that Husserl called the intentional "being-one-in-the-other" (*Ineinandersein*). In the background one is "one-in-the-other" in such a way that one is attuned to intentional counterparts that co-determine the framework through which one experiences the world (Hua VI, p. 258). More than simply being "one-with-the-other" (*Mitsein*), as Heidegger stressed (as cited in Schmid 2005, p. 246), human sociality is characterized by this peculiar way of incorporating the social relations within one's own mind: being "one-in-the-other", one experiences a common world, extruding one's own environment into a social one. What Walther points out is that this extrusion only occurs via incandescent operations of joining and separating. Only affective life has the power to warm the background and to mold it radically.

One should not overlook Walther's intuition that the background can develop in relational fields despite the conscious life of the subject. Children, for example, experience the world largely through relevant counterparts who, without being thematized, enrich the environment with new intentional qualities. Daniel Stern calls these counterparts "regulators of the self" (Stern 1985, p. 76). Their presence in the background of the Self modifies the intentional structure of the experienced world. In relational life, backgrounds develop together in generative processes that lead to concrete (from *concrescere*, to grow with) sociality long before full conscious life develops. From the very beginning of early relational life, the background is marked by relevant counterparts who are not thematized. Some of them become familiar regulators of one's behavior, implicitly shaping habitual postures. They begin to be thematized only in fantasies and games, and not just in infancy. These counterparts can further be (partially) thematized in inner speech, referring to oneself through these intentional others in me. "It is constitutive to the human psyche to have *others in mind*", as Rochat keenly claims (2009, p. 17). The background is full of these "ghosts" that are sedimented through experience, related according to affective positions, such as joining and separating. Because of their strong emotive and affective relevance, they recur compulsively in our minds as soon as they are stimulated. In adult life, they are no longer *regulators* but rather *evaluators of the self*: the sentiments others bear toward us, the way they take or would take a stand, their judgments constantly drive not only our actions but also more deeply the cultivation of our desires and affects.

According to Walther's intuition the concrete background is the non-reducible basic level of sociality (Walther 1923, p. 69). In it, social relations are shaped: every act of joining or separating embeds the social positions one assumes in the background. The subject is therefore, from the very beginning, a bearer of habits that arise in relational, intersubjective affective interactions.

3.2 We-Experiences Against Us-Background

It is only against this concrete background that our actual we-experiences are possible. Individuals participate in them on the basis of their background and they are structured in mutual intentional interaction and common knowledge. The contemporary debate about we-intentionality tends to break down common knowledge into some form of iteration: in a predicative account of intentionality, it seems impossible to avoid a kind of *infinite regress* of mutual beliefs that are required in order to do something together. Walther points out that if a plurality of subjects experience something, these lived experiences do not become a *common* experience (a we-experience) by virtue of the different subjects simply knowing that everyone is experiencing the same object. She therefore switches from *having common knowledge* to *mutually joining common experience*. She describes this switch by analyzing the intentional structure of *actual-present we-experiences*. This theory of *we-experiences* has recently been partially criticized by Schmid (2005, pp. 132–138). However some of his critical remarks are moot if we understand Walther's theory in the frame of Husserl's concept of intentional background and Pfänder's psychology of sentiments. Here is the structure that Walther presents:

1. Experience of 'A', who is intentionally directed toward an object;
1a Experience of 'B', who is *similarly* intentionally directed toward the *same* object.
2. Empathic experience of 'A', who empathizes with the experience of 'B' (1a);
2a Empathic experience of 'B', who empathizes with the experience of 'A'. (1).
3. *Joining* act of 'A' with the act of 'B' (or with him) whom 'A' empathically experiences;
4. *Joining* act of 'B' with the act of 'A' (or with him) whom 'B' empathically experiences.
4a Empathic experience of 'B', who experiences that 'A' has joined his act (or him).

We already know that *actual-present* experiences are embedded in a background and tend to shape the background further in the form of *habitus*. When 'A' is intentionally directed toward an object, he does it in the way his habitual frames suggest to him and according to every new actual present experience. So does 'B'. Both of them are somehow acquainted with the object they are experiencing. Suddenly 'A' notices 'B', who is somehow similarly directed to the same object. 'A' is capable of empathy, he has already collected experiences with other people and can see that 'B' is interested in the same object as him. The same goes for 'B'.

In order to achieve (1–2), 'A' and 'B' already need to have a common background and to be acquainted with some typical structures that relate to the object they are experiencing. They have at their disposal a concrete background that already joins these intentional structures. Against it, they realize that they are both directed to the same object. They could remain in this situation of mutual recognition: in the rush of daily life we habitually notice that we are with other people doing similar things, waiting for the train or shopping, and so on. This usually

happens without commitment: everybody gets off the train when they have to, without deliberating it with their fellow travelers, mutually knowing that they were plausibly all waiting for the same train. Thanks to typification it is possible to perform codified actions and cooperative endeavors that do not require an individual to go beyond his expected function: not only collective actions, such as daily commuting, but, for example, also working at an assembly line. Working together, one with the other, does not require a community if the work is standardized. On the other hand, fighting for workers' rights cannot be successful if the workers do not join together as a group and do not recognize themselves as part of it.

But let us return to the structure of actual we-experiences.

Let us now suppose that 'A' is backpacking, he is waiting on the platform and sees 'B' who is backpacking, too. They notice each other. 'B' is intrigued by 'A' and looks at her furtively. 'A' does likewise. Their eyes meet, they look around, their eyes meet again. They feel tension and embarrassment. Finally one of them smiles, the other smiles too. They turn to each other, mutually aware that the other is somehow friendly and well-disposed. They actually have something in common, they are in the same situation, they are both backpacking, and they know what it is like!

This example shows that a sentiment cannot be iterated in the way predicative knowledge can: if 'A' likes 'B' and 'B' likes 'A', 'A' surely likes that 'B' likes her and *vice versa*, rather they do not care how this statement can be iterated, they simply *join* themselves and like the fact that they are joining. The more they get acquainted the more their backgrounds interweave, the more their *actual-present* experience can stem from joint frames. If these joint frames become *habitual*, they will live through joint backgrounds, they will feel how bonded they are. They will act from reasons arising from this joint experience: they will live through their mutual "us in me", as they would say. Their joint background will be enriched: we can define it as the "us-background" against which they habitually live. When we-experiences become habitual, each member of this interaction can live through this communal rational structure even if other members are not actually present. Each member can therefore act according to communal reasons and experience the world and himself through the eyes of the relational *Us* that is interwoven in his background.

This common life is experienced by individual persons, but it streams from communal background-structures, which are sedimented in affective relations. Walther describes the *plural first person perspective* as follows:

> I live and experience at the same time through myself *and* through *them in me*, through 'Us'. Well *before* these experiences come to the fore of the I-point, before they are actualized, they are lived experiences of the community, because they already arise as motions from me *and* the others *in* me (Walther 1923, p. 71).[3]

Schmid's critical remarks on Walther's theory concern the suspicion that she remains restrained in the so-called Husserlian "monological" account of

[3]"Ich lebe und erlebe aus mir selbst *und* aus *ihnen in mir* zugleich heraus, aus 'Uns'. Schon *ehe* diese Erlebnisse in den Ichpunkt eintreten, in ihm aktualisiert werden, sind sie also Gemeinschaftserlebnisse, denn sie entspringen ja schon als Regungen aus mir *und* den anderen *in* mir."

intentionality (Schmid 2005, p. 136). Although the point of departure for her analysis of *actually present we-experiences* are acts in the mode of *I-intentionality*, we saw how they are embedded in a background that is from the very beginning socially attuned through acts of joining (and separating). If this us-background becomes a habitual one then a community arises: community (us-background) presupposes sociality (concrete background). Following Walther's ontology, the core of the *We* is pre-reflexive and non-thematic and it is tracked in habits through a web of conscious and unconscious sentiments of *mutual habitual joining*: it is the network of the us-background.

3.3 Acts in the Name of the Community

Thematizing their communal rational structure, members become capable of taking positions towards themselves and the world or towards the community itself. When its members thematize communal reasons the community reaches a further stage of complexity: its reasons directly become part of the process of motivations, and not only indirectly through pre-thematic us-background. Its members can now reflect on themselves *as members of* the community and can act accordingly. Finally, they can act or choose one that can act *in the name of* the community, representing it as a public person (Walther 1923, p. 104). Walther follows Reinach in order to conceptualize this further step of complexity, but she does not master his theory in its full richness (see Mulligan 1987). Be that as it may, it is important to stress that a reflexive and thematic *We* is necessary to give institutional form and functions to the community and that a thematic *We* is achievable only against the us-background.

4 Conclusions

Walther's original account is linked to two important issues in the phenomenological tradition that have fallen into obscurity: Husserl's intentional background theory and Pfänder's theory of sentiments. They both conceptualize subjectivity as an intentional pole of affection and action (or I-Center) and as a bearer of gradually developing systems of *habitualized intentionality*, articulated in its individuated background (or Self). Understanding subjectivity as a pole of affection and action does not mean giving an individualistic account of intentionality. Because Husserl calls this pole of intentionality "I", it is important to stress that this essential subjective polarity of intentionality is not to be confused with any form of "I-intentionality", in the sense that this expression has acquired in current debates. By "I-intentionality" one can mean both an individual embodiment, and a personal reference to the world. According to phenomenology, bodily intentionality is relationally shaped through acts of affect attunement. A personal level of subjectivity emerges within *intentional* attitudes that require the prior development of

a background of affections and bodily actions. Walther shows how both personal I-intentionality and we-intentionality emerge from joint background and basic levels of concrete background: we-intentionality does not exclude subjective perspectives, but it occurs through common joint frames and against a common us-background. I-intentionality is always a matter of a socialized Self, since I reinforce *myself* in relation to my counterparts.

As the concretization of the background in its social embedment extrudes experience into a social level, habitual joining provides a new dimension: the dimension of we-intentionality against the us-background. Walther calls the switch to we-experience an "intentional somersault" (Walther 1923, p. 98): recognizing it as a scientific paradigm would mean a "Copernican turn" for sociology! Following Walther, the turn would consist in the enhancement of the description of social life and plural action through the phenomenological concept of background.

Far from being restrained by a monological account of intentionality, the tradition of phenomenology has provided a dynamic account of it by from the very beginning facing up to the challenge of social embedment. The description of subjectivity through the articulation of the respective roles of the I-Center, the Background, and the Self can open a path toward transposing the phenomenological account into the terms of our contemporary debate. The I-Center has the non-reducible character of the first-person perspective. Nevertheless, this egological life is embedded in the background of passive life. Each act performed by the subject tracks the background according to its intentional features. Thanks to the sentiments the background is enriched by relational fields that extrude the egological perspective into a socialized one, without suppressing it. That which lives against the background of the relational selves it carries is the I-Center. It is implicated in the intentional "being-one-in-the-other" (*Ineinandersein*) in a common social world (Hua VI, p. 258): it is the selves in the reciprocal backgrounds that are one-in-the-other. Knotted within these relational selves and their non-reducible embodied perspectives, the I-Center can acquire, through habitual positions and attitudes, a personal stance, that shapes a personal self. At the same time the I-Center can attune and share communal habits against the background of other selves.

Therefore, what is responsible for the mereology of collective intentionality is not the non-reducible egological character of intentionality, but the socialized background against which acts are performed. As Walther puts it, a common (or a group's) mind is a matter of a multipolar network of personal I-Centers and a concrete common relational background in which those I-Centers are embedded. Thus, in order to deny individualism in ontology and metaphysics we do not need to deny subjectivity as the concrete bearer of intentionality at all. There is no pre-constituted subjectivity that joins the community: in joining, subjects reciprocally form each other, long before they join a communal life in the further sense of a communal we-experience against an us-background. According to Walther the bearer of a community's own intentionality is not a unique super-individual subject, but a network of several habit systems. Its structure is not a subjective and polar one, as natural persons are, but a *multipolar* one.

In Walther's account we find no monological conception of intentionality, but a relational and interpersonal account of subjectivity that tries to describe how the irreducible modality of we-intentionality arises against a background of joint sentiments. She could therefore provide us with a paradigmatic turn in social ontology beyond both individualism and collectivism. Furthermore, a critical reception of her account situated in between realistic and constitutive phenomenology could free the current debate from old prejudices concerning Husserl's concept of intentionality.

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