
Community and the Absence of Hostility: Interpretation and Defense of Gerda Walther's Account

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Abstract: According to Gerda Walther, a community arises only if positive feelings, which she calls inner unification, eliminate hostilities among people. There are two objections to this claim, which one can develop from Aron Gurwitsch's critical examination of Walther's account. The present paper aims to respond to those objections and, through this, to clarify her account of community. To this end, the author deals with Walther's brief remark on a "pathological" form of community and her accounts of inner unification. Considering those two factors, the author further shows that Walther's idea is more plausible than it initially may appear. Contrary to what Gurwitsch seems to think, her account of communities allows for conflict and even certain types of hostility within a community.

Keywords: Gerda Walther, Aron Gurwitsch, Communities, Inner Unification, Hostility

Introduction

In her *Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften* (1923), Gerda Walther claims that a social group falls short of a community (*Gemeinschaft*) if it lacks certain positive feelings as its ontological basis. According to her, a social group is a community only if such feelings, habitually shared by its members, tie them together. Thus, she calls the class of feelings in question *inner unification* (*innere Einigung*). Her detailed analysis of how multiple subjects share and habitualize inner unification, to which she dedicates a large part of her treatise, is now well known.¹

¹ No small number of works on this topic have appeared. See, for instance, Caminada 2014, León and Zahavi 2016, Zahavi and Salice 2016, Calcagno 2018, Mühl 2018, Schmid and Xu 2018, Szanto 2018, Luft 2018, Tranas and Caminada 2020, Zalinsky 2022.

The present paper aims to elucidate and defend a central (if not *the* central) idea in Walther's discussion of communities and their affective basis, just outlined briefly.¹ According to her, any community has its ontological basis in the shared inner unification of its members. Then, a social group without such shared feelings would not be a community. She holds such a claim because, for her, a community arises only where shared inner unification has eliminated hostilities among people. However, she here faces two objections, which one can find in Aron Gurwitsch's critical examination of her account of community. For reasons that will be clear, I call them the *emptiness objection* and the *pointlessness objection*, respectively.

To address those objections to Walther's view, the present paper focuses on two topics from *Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften*. First, I will reconstruct her brief remark on a "pathological" form of community. Second, I will clarify her very idea that inner unification eliminates hostilities among people. Through these discussions, I show that Walther's idea is more plausible than it initially may appear.

The present paper is structured as follows. Section 1 overviews Walther's account of communities to the extent necessary for my discussion. Section 2 presents the two objections to Walther and briefly outlines my response to them for her. Sections 3 and 4 reconstruct Walther's remark on the "pathological" form of community and her phenomenological analysis of inner unifications, respectively. With these reconstructions, Section 5 disarms the two objections. The key to my response is Walther's account of genuine and non-genuine experiences. The Conclusion points to a further issue one should address to defend Walther's position fully.

1. Inner Unification as the Ontological Base of Communities

There are three points to highlight for reconstructing how Walther proposes that any community has shared inner unification as its basis.

First, at stake here is the *ontology* of communities, which Walther contrasts with the phenomenology of communities.² This point is obvious from the full title of her work:

¹ The present paper remains neutral with whether and how we should distinguish affections and emotions.

² For a discussion of Walther on the phenomenology or phenomenological constitution of communities, see Salice and Uemura 2018.

Zur Ontology der sozialen Gemeinschaften (mit einem Anhang zur Phänomenologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften). Now, what is the difference between the two disciplines? According to Walther, while ontology investigates the essence of any object (in the broadest sense), phenomenology studies that mode of the givenness of any object, which is determined by the object's essence (cf. Walther, 1923: 1). With this specified idea of ontology, we can paraphrase her view on community in terms of existential dependence: A community's existence essentially depends on its members' shared inner unification. Note the reference to *essence* here. For Walther, it is not a matter of contingent fact but a necessity that a community exists dependently on shared inner unification. In other words, her claim ranges over *any possible* community. This point makes her position considerably vulnerable to counterexamples. She could not keep her idea as it stands, even if we find it possible for a social group to be a community without shared inner unification.

Second, Walther's ontological discussion presupposes that the essence of communities (*Gemeinschaften*), by virtue of which they exist as communities, includes something common (*gemeinsam*) to their members (cf. Walther, 1923: 18–19 [2021: 281]). She seems to give no reason for this presupposition but the etymological one we can easily see in her expressions. In general, we should be wary of an argument that appeals to etymology and ask whether we can duplicate the argument in any other language. However, as far as the present case is concerned, her presupposition is hard to contest. Almost certainly, people must have something in common for a community to emerge between them.

Third, under such a presupposition, Walther tries to show that any community has a *common aim* that its members share through interaction (*Wechselwirkung*). To put it in her terminology, we form a community only if we are *motivated by a common intentional object* we share (I will clarify this turn of phrase in Section 3). Her discussion proceeds with examples that are *not* appropriate cases of what she calls communities but help us understand why such a community needs a common aim. The first inappropriate example is people with the same symbol or sign external to them, such as a crest or a totem (cf. Walther, 1923, 19 [2021: 281–282]). She quickly dismisses this example because it does not indicate what is common in a community. A community may exist without such a symbol or sign. For essentially the same reason, she refuses the idea suggested by the second inappropriate example: People with the same bodily feature (cf. Walther, 1923: 19 [2021: 282]). As the third inappropriate example, she points to people who have the same “physical life [*körperliches Leben*],” such as disease (cf. Walther, 1923: 19–20

[2021: 282]). This sort of sameness cannot be the commonality needed for a community because, she claims, people with different diseases or unhealthy conditions often form a community. Then she focuses on the “spiritual [*geistig*]” life of humans. As the fourth inappropriate example, she presents a case of three mathematicians from different countries (China, Argentina, and Norway) who happen to dedicate their lives to solving the same problem (cf. Walther, 1923: 20 [2021: 282–283]).¹ She also denies that they form a community. However, she uses this case as a springboard for her conclusion. Relying on some other examples, she submits a lengthy discussion on how a common or shared aim emerges from mutual knowledge and interactions between humans (cf. Walther, 1923: 20–30 [2021: 282–291]). Not to make things too complicated for this stage of discussion, let us postpone examining her argument until Section 3. At this moment, identifying her conclusion would be sufficient for us: A common aim shared by the members is necessary for a community to exist.

Against those backgrounds, Walther claims that the essence of communities consists in a shared aim *plus* inner unification. Again, she advances her argument by appealing to examples.

For instance, let us take as an example a number of indiscriminately collected workers—Slovaks, Poles, Italians, etc.—who are all employed on a construction site. They do not understand each other’s language, do not know each other, have never before had anything to do with each other—they all just want to earn a living and have thus accidentally been employed by the same entrepreneur. Now, for instance, they are putting up something like a wall. Some fetch the bricks, some pass them along to others, who eventually give them to the bricklayers, who spread them with mortar and lay them on top of each other. [...] We have a number of people who know of each other and who are interacting and oriented to each other in their behavior. With that, we have what (for example) Max Weber calls “communal action.” Furthermore, at one level of their mental lives these people relate to the same intentional object with a unified sense: the bricks, the walls, the whole construction. A partly similar mental-spiritual life results from this, which is permeated by a unity of sense and regulated by the same intentional object [...]. All this is

¹ In giving this example, Walther does not explicitly state that the mathematicians *happen* to be working on the same problem. However, she almost certainly regards them as unacquainted with each other. There are two reasons for this interpretation. First, she sets their countries of origin far apart from each other. Second and more importantly, in this context, she quickly points out that mutual knowledge is necessary (but not sufficient) to establish a community among them. See Walther (1923: 20); see also Section 2 below. This claim implies the absence of such knowledge between the mathematicians.

present and, furthermore, the workers know it. —Do we have a community here? (Walther, 1923: 30–31 [2021: 292–293])

To decide on the question, she articulates her example of the workers slightly more.

We assumed that the workers did not know each other more than just described; we added that they belonged to different nations with different languages. Let us now assume that they face each other mistrustfully and with hostility, or at best indifferently, as rivals for wages, as members of foreign nations. Can we then speak of a community, despite all their conscious external interaction and the shared meaning of their behavior? In our opinion, you can only speak here of a societal connection, even if it is of a specific sort. (Walther, 1923: 31 [2021: 293], translation slightly modified)

Her contention is clear and straightforward: The workers do not form a community as long as mistrust, hostility, and indifference prevail among them. Given this diagnosis, one should have no difficulty in understanding her further claim.

However, if, instead of inner alienation and indifference, indeed hostility, we added to all the other specifications an inner connection, of whatever kind—however loose it might be, however small its scope, even if it only extended to coexistence at work on this construction site and had only the same duration as this—would we not then have a community before us?

Here—and only here—it seems to us a real community would be present. Only through its inner connectedness, that feeling of belonging-together—however loose and limited it may be—does a social formation change into a community. By contrast, as long as this feature is lacking, we would group all social formations (including organizations and institutions etc. in Max Weber’s sense) together under the collective term societal [*gesellschaftlich*] formations. (Walther, 1923: 33 [2021: 294–295], translation slightly modified)

A community is marked by an affective state that she calls “inner connectedness [*innere Verbundenheit*]” or “feeling of belonging-together [*Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit*].” Rephrasing such an affective state further as *inner unification*, she formulates her idea clearly and succinctly: “all social formations that exhibit such inner unification of their members, and *only* these, are communities, in our opinion” (Walther, 1923: 33

[2021: 295]).¹ Then the next question is: What is inner unification? Part of her attempt to answer this question, to which she devotes subsequent pages of her work, will be the topic of Section 4.

2. Two Objections to Walther

Two objections would rise against Walther's discussion just overviewed.

First, one may object that Walther's concept of community is *almost empty*. This objection, which I name the *emptiness objection*, stems from Gurwitsch's criticism of Walther in his *Die Mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Milieuwelt* (1977: 175 [1979: 122]).² According to him, positive feelings, which Walther thinks eliminate hostility and indifference among people, do not mark what we usually call communities. Indeed, if fraught with negative attitudes among its members, a community in the ordinary sense would be disturbed and prone to disappear. However, he claims that is just a *consequence* of the internal opposition.³ In other words, the presence itself of negative attitudes or internal opposition does not amount to the dissolution of the community in the ordinary sense. If this criticism is correct, we would find very few, if any, cases of communities in Walther's sense. Arguably, most social groups we encounter in real-life situations are those in which hostility or indifference has temporarily, more often, or even permanently arisen among their members. For instance, let us suppose that a couple in a family became temporarily hostile to each other but restored their relationship, saving the family from falling apart. If we follow Walther's definition of community (as Gurwitsch reformulates

¹ As one can expect from the contrast she makes between communities and "social/associative [*gesellschaftlich*]" connections or formations, she here admits that her position is close to, but not totally coincide with, that of Ferdinand Tönnies, who famously distinguishes *Gemeinschaft* from *Gesellschaft*. See Walther (1923: 33 [2021: 295]). It is far beyond the task of this paper to clarify and examine how Walther addressed the now classical sociological theory. For the same reason, I do not deal with her relationship to Weber to whom she refers in the passage quoted above (on this issue, see Zalinsky 2022). It is noteworthy, however, that in this context, she also mentions the German translation of Franklin Henry Giddings' *Principles of Sociology* (3rd ed. originally published in 1896). Walther's term *Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit* might stem from Giddings's *consciousness of kind*, translated in German as *Bewusstsein der Zusammengehörigkeit* (cf. Giddings, 1911: III). This fact might seem to prompt us translate *Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit* as *feeling of kind*. However, such a translation would obscure the term's connection with Walther's claim that the object of inner unification is "belonging [*gehörig*]" to its subject (see Section 4 below). Therefore, I stick to use *feeling of belonging-together*.

² For Gurwitsch's verdicts on Walther, see also Zahavi and Salice (2016: 523–524).

³ It is not entirely clear what Gurwitsch means by "internal opposition [*innere Auseinandersetzung*]." In the present paper, we assume that internal opposition is or involves conflict between people which may accompany hostile sentiments.

it), the family would not fall under the category of community anymore at the moment of the breakout of the hostility between the couple. Moreover, even if there are communities that have exceptionally escaped hostility and indifference so far, they would be fragile. They will dissolve as soon as negative feelings or indifference prevail in them.

Second, one may object that Walther fails to propose a good analysis of sociality because the category of communities as she defines it is *sociologically pointless*. We can develop this *pointlessness objection* also from another critical remark Gurwitsch makes on Walther's view (cf. Gurwitsch, 1977: 172–174 [1979: 120–121]). According to Gurwitsch, positive feelings are superfluous for communities *qua* social groups. As Walther admits, communities and merely social groups that are not communities have the same social structure. They both are groups of people with a common aim. Therefore, inner unification, which she considers the mark of communities, would be something merely additive to the social structure in question.¹ This means that the social structure of a group remains the same regardless of whether it involves inner unification, i.e., whether the group is a community. Granting for a moment that Gurwitsch is correct in giving this observation, we could conclude that Walther's conception of communities is uninteresting. If we define a community as a social group with a common aim and additive inner unification, communities would show no peculiar feature concerning their social structure, which would distinguish them from other types of social groups. Then, what is the point of admitting communities as a *social* or *sociological* category?

In the remainder of the present paper, I will try to defend Walther from those two objections. In the following two sections, I will explicate details of her account of communities, which enables a response to the emptiness objection in the other section. This response also makes it possible to disarm the pointlessness objection in a chain reaction, as it were.

¹ In Gurwitsch's own expression, a community for Walther is a "social formation+supervenient positive sentiments and feelings [*gesellschaftliches Gebilde+hinzukommende positive Gesinnungen und Gefühle*]" (Gurwitsch, 1977: 173 [1979: 121]). Note that the term *supervenient* positive sentiments and feelings in the English translation is misleading for us contemporary readers. According to the standard terminology of our time, *x* is supervenient just in case there is something, *y*, such that there can be no difference concerning *x* without any difference concerning *y*. Understood in this sense, the supervenient positive sentiments and feelings could change only with some change in the social formation to which they are added. However, Gurwitsch seems to admit that positive feelings can disappear or turn negative without any change in the social structure. Thus, it is better to translate *hinzukommend* as *additive*. Incidentally, Gurwitsch's conflation of inner unification to positive sentiments, which we can find in that phrase, rests on some misunderstanding of Walther. On her separation of inner unification from positive sentiments, see Section 4 below.

3. “Pathological” Community with no Room for Ingroup Conflict

To see how Walther allows ingroup opposition or conflict in a community, let us go back to one of her inappropriate examples of community, namely, the case of the three mathematicians from different countries. They happen to devote their lives to the solution to the same mathematical problem. According to Walther, they do not form a community because mutual knowledge and interaction are missing. In the succeeding passages I postponed discussing above, she specifies what interaction is needed for the mathematician to form a community. Denying that the interaction here is physical, she claims that it should be *intentional* (cf. Walther, 1923: 22 [2021: 284]). In other words, the interaction should be the one through which one subject tries to influence the thoughts or volitions of others. However, she quickly adds that mutual knowledge and intentional interaction are still insufficient for subjects to establish a community (cf. Walther, 1923: 22 [2021: 285]). These two factors are present between two people who are bickering and slapping each other, but this does not create a community between them. What is still missing here?

According to Walther, for a community to emerge between people who know each other and intentionally interact, they must have *the same guide*. In other words, they must be able to lead their lives toward the same aim. She expresses this idea initially as follows.

In order to be incorporated into a community, to “communalize,” the members of a social formation must obviously not only be in some kind of general intentional interaction, but in their interaction with each other they must also *lead the same mental-spiritual life in relation to the same intentional contents in the same sense and in the same way*. (Walther, 1923: 22 [2021: 285], my emphasis)¹

By “intentional contents,” she seems to mean objects which *guide* one’s actions, attitudes, and others. That is probably why she often calls an object of that sort a “guiding

¹ In the footnote attached to this quote, Walther refers to Reinach’s *Die apriorische Grundlagen des bürgerlichen Rechtes*. However, on the page she cites (Reinach, 1913: 707), Reinach does not talk about the shared aim of community. Instead, he proposes that acts of ordering (*Befehl*) have a peculiar feature—the need of uptake (*Vernehmungsbedürftigkeit*)—that makes them and alike acts (such as acts of promising) classified under a category of experiences he calls social acts. Likely, Walther’s footnote should have been placed in a preceding passage, where she discusses intentional interaction (cf. Walther, 1923: 22; see also above). It should be noted that Walther has a different conception of social acts than Reinach (cf. Uemura and Salice 2018). Such a circumstance may (partially) explain why she uses the term intentional interaction rather than social acts in that passage.

object [*Leitgegenstand/-gegenständlichkeit*]” (cf. Walther, 1923: 52, 53, 54, 67, 112, 113, 117, 125, 126, 132, 134, 138, 139). Being intentional, a shared object of a community need not be real and may be ideal or even non-existent (cf. Walther, 1923: 24–25 [2021: 287]). To anticipate her idea to be discussed soon, she holds that such an intentional object *motivates* us to act in the context of a community to which we belong.

With these clarifications, we can rephrase Walther’s idea at this stage of her discussion as follows: To make a group of people into a community, they must have the same guiding object in the same way. However, she does not think this idea is conclusive. It has two problems.

First, this idea does not seem plausible. Must *any* community have its members guided by the same object? Does a family, a (stereo)typical example of a community, necessarily have such a guide?

Walter answers these questions later in her treatise. Any community must have a common object as its guide, but the common object may be *the community itself* (cf. Walther, 1923: 67 [2021: 296]).¹ In other words, there may be communities where the members’ shared aim is *to be together*, which guides them. This collateral condition seems to persuade us to classify families under what Walther calls communities. Better or worse, a family seems to disintegrate when its members give up being together as (one of) their end(s).

Second, if not implausible, the above formulation is too narrow because it requires community members to have the same guide *in the same way*. As Walther herself points out, it is so narrow that it cannot accommodate cases of communities with a division of labor (cf. Walther, 1923: 23 [2021: 285]). For illustration, she gives an example of a “primitive” family where a man and a woman engage in different occupations for their shared aim, namely, sustaining the daily life of themselves and other family members. They are supposed to form a community under a shared aim but do not seem to have it in the same way.

For a better formulation of her idea, Walther appeals to the *manner or mode of presentation* of shared aims.

Thus, on the “objective” side (in the broadest sense), only the same intention to an identical object (in the broadest sense) is necessary for community; but this says nothing

¹ On Walther’s discussion of such “reflective” communities, see Luft 2018.

about the way of representing and the way of being of this object. (It can be a real, unreal, or fictive formation of some sort.) (Walther 1923: 26 [2021: 288])

Let us continue with the above example. The man and woman from the “primitive” family may intend the shared aim—sustaining the family’s daily life—in different manners. For example, one may try to contribute to the aim by hunting, while the other by keeping a fire. These differences, which make their *different* ways of intending the aim, do not prevent them from having the *same* aim.

Nevertheless, according to Walther, community members must *not* take their shared aim in unrestrictedly different ways. To form a community, they must aim at the same intentional object *in the same sense* (*Sinn*) (cf. Walther, 1923: 26). By this phrase, she probably points out that different means to the shared end must somehow be *well-ordered*. Then the next question is what this constraint amounts to.

At this juncture, Walther talks about a “pathological” form of community.

But the matter could perhaps be clarified in the following way. It must be possible to connect all the mental-spiritual expressions of the lives of the members of the community, insofar as they are motivated by this common intentional object, so that they *never* conflict or mutually nullify or neutralize each other. Indeed, where this seem to be the case within a community, either it is not true community or there are “outgrowths” and “symptoms of illness” of communal life, which must disappear again if they are not to lead to the dissolution of the community. Instead, the mental-spiritual life of the various members must be connected in a unified whole, within the same context of meaning, even if perhaps only very indirectly. (Walther, 1923: 26–27 [2021: 289], translation modified, my emphasis)

According to her, we should not conflate the well-orderliness to the absence of (potential) ingroup conflict (*Widerstreit*). Rather, she maintains, the well-orderliness consists just in the circumstance that the members’ actions and attitudes are unified as (different) means to the same end. Thus, she allows a community to have ingroup conflict, saying that not allowing such conflict would make a community pathological and, ultimately, lead to dissolution.¹

¹ It is not a good idea to take Walther’s claim in the above quote at face value and claim that for her, a community *literally without ingroup* conflict is pathological. She seems to think that Germany during WWI is a pathological community (see the next quote below). As we know, and as she later recalled in her

Walther illustrates her claim with an example, as she often does.

Let us make this clear with an example. For instance, let us imagine, on the one hand, an old, completely uneducated peasant woman who has never left her remote village. This old woman hears that Germany is at war and that it must win—and she knits stockings for the soldiers, in order to contribute in her way to the “victory of Germany.” This victory of Germany is thus the intentional object toward which her action is directed. On the other hand, let us imagine, for instance, the German Kaiser as supreme commander of the imperial army, and his activity toward a victorious advance of the German troops. His intentional object, which motivates his action, is therefore also the victory of Germany. Certainly a sheer unbridgeable difference yawns between the representation the Kaiser has of Germany's victory—and his activity toward it—and the representation the little old woman has of Germany's victory and her contribution to it. Nevertheless, the Kaiser and the little old woman relate intentionally to the same object: the victory of Germany. And despite all their differences, their actions motivated by this object can combine into a concordant unified total action with a unified elation of motivation, even if this only happens thanks to many intervening links. (Walther, 1923: 27 [2021: 289], translation slightly modified)

Every action the woman and the Kaiser perform as community members of the Empire, under the guidance of their shared aim, namely Germany's victory, is unified into a single total action (*Gesamthandeln*). In this sense, the two subjects share the same intentional object. This object *motivates* them because it is a reason for their actions.¹ Each of them, when asked, “why are you doing such a thing,” can reply, “because I am fighting for the victory of Germany.” In this way, the Kaiser and the woman, together with many other Germans, make up a community. According to Walther, that is enough for the existence of the community. If, as she seems to think here, there is no room for inner conflict in the community in the middle of a so-called total war, that is irrelevant to

autobiography (cf. Walther 1960: 149), some German citizens, such as Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, opposed the war. Thus, to avoid making her example implausible, we should understand the pathological community here as one that *does not tolerate* for internal conflict in a certain sense of “tolerate” which I do not specify further here.

¹ Here Walther follows the conception of motives as reasons, which is widely shared by early phenomenologists as well as Husserl. Note that their takes on the nature of motives come in varieties. For an overview of this issue, see Uemura and Salice 2019. Walther's adoption of the early-phenomenological conception of motives can explain why she calls an intentional object of the relevant sort *Leitmotiv* (cf. Walther, 1923: 28, 29, 67, 92, 113, 132, 133, 138, 142, 143, 144).

its status as a community. For her, the absence of (potential) inner conflict is not what makes it a community but what makes it a *pathological* community.

It is unsure how to understand Walther's diagnosis of the pathological form of community. According to her, a community must cure its pathology if we want it to persist. Indeed, her example for this claim may well seem impressive and compelling to many of her supposed readers in the 1920s and us in the 21st century. No matter how remote, the commitment to the total war was a cause of the Empire's dissolution. The revolution of 1918 was triggered by the mutiny at Kiel by sailors who had refused the order to confront the Royal Navy.¹ It does not seem particularly bold to claim that Germany, since the enthusiasm of the 1914 summer, had been a "pathological" community in a certain sense. However, one may question how much we can generalize Walther's view of this particular example. Her own generalization, taken at face value, is that communities with no room for inner conflict are prone to dissolve. How can she ground such a strong claim in a single case, Germany during the Great War?

In the present paper, I do not go further into this problem. Whatever law-like relation holds, or does not hold, between the absence of (potential) ingroup conflict and the dissolution of a community, virtually everyone would find it undesirable for a community, threatened with extinction, not to allow for ingroup conflict that would arise from an attempt to escape the danger. For the present purpose, it does not matter much what explains the danger nomologically. The main question here is how to get rid of dangers like that.

Now, let us conclude on the topic at hand: Walther would claim that a community can allow ingroup conflict and, through this, obtain immunity to the pathological status. True, she does not make this point explicit enough. However, we can infer it from her passage at stake. As she claims in one of the above quotes, pathological states of communal life *must disappear* again "if they are not to lead to the dissolution of the community" (Walther, 1923: 27 [2021: 289]). She suggests that if members do not want the community in danger to dissolve, they *ought* to break out of the situation. What must they do? The best available answer would be: To oppose the community's wrong-headed aim, even if that would create ingroup conflict. This *ought* holds only if ingroup conflict is possible within the community.²

¹ See Gerwarth 2020 (especially, chapters 4–6) for a recent reconstruction of how the revolution spread across Germany like an "oil patch" (101).

² Here, I assume that Walther would accept the ought-implies-can principle.

Even though Gurwitsch's understanding of Walther has turned out to be inaccurate, this is just halfway to the response to the emptiness objection. It is still uncertain whether Walther can *coherently* allow a community to have conflict. Is conflict compatible with inner unification? To decide on this issue, let us move on to the details of Walther's discussion of inner unification.

4. Phenomenology of Inner Unification

Walther owes much to Alexander Pfänder for her analysis of inner unification. In his *Zur Psychologie der Gesinnungen* (1913/1916), Pfänder analyzes inner unification as one of the integral components of positive sentiments.¹ Sentiments are a kind of feelings such as love, friendliness, liking, favor, benevolence, hate, hostility, dislike, disfavor, and malevolence (cf. Pfänder, 1913: 334). As one can easily see from the examples, sentiments are either positive or negative. Inner unification, contrasted with what Pfänder calls inner division, lay under positive sentiments in general (cf. Pfänder, 1913: 366–367). Let us clarify his idea with an example of positive sentiments, loving someone. Having this experience, I feel the beloved *close* to me. He analyses such an experiential closeness in terms of inner unification. On the general characterization of inner unification, Walther largely follows her teacher in Munich (cf. Walther, 1923: 34–36).

Walther adds a new thread of ideas to the theme from Pfänder by, for one thing, arguing for an idea we do not find in the latter's discussion of sentiments and inner unification in 1913/1916. She claims that inner unification may occur *without* a positive sentiment that involves it.² As usual, Walther appeals to an example to defend her claim. Characterizing inner unification as a feeling of the object's *belonging* (*zugehörig*) to its subject (cf. Walther, 1923: 45), she puts her finger on the experience of *feeling at home* (*heimlich fühlen*).

¹ For an overview of Pfänder on sentiments, see Uemura & Yaegashi 2020. See also Section 1 of Uemura 2023 for some complementary discussions.

² Pfänder also explicitly accepts this claim later in his *Die Seele des Menschen* (cf. Pfänder 1933: 36). Whether this fact is due to Walther's influence on him is difficult to determine. He does not refer to her in the book. Instead, one might possibly speculate that Pfänder influences Walther on the present issue. In her treatise on community, she draws on Pfänder's unpublished lecture *Psychologie des Menschen* (cf. Walther, 1923: 10n3, 17n1, 34, 48n1, 52, 55, 58n1, 102n1, 103n1, 131n1, 140n2, 155n1), from which *Die Seele des Menschen* might stem.

Such a unification takes place, for example, when someone enters the room and then soon “feels at home.” [...] In such and similar cases, however, despite the unification with the room, one can seldom talk about love in the broadest sense toward the object of unification. (Walther, 1923: 45, my translation)

Walther’s argument from examples may become more convincing if each of us adds detail to the room. Possibly, she avoids detailed descriptions of the rooms in the hope that her readers, presumably having different ways of living with different tastes, would make her example more realistic on their own. Be that as it may, in my case, I am not particularly fond of my drab office, but this does not prevent me from feeling at home in it when I return there from a stressful meeting. In this sense, I feel a certain closeness to my office, which, she would say, makes it *belonging* to me.¹ My feeling at home seems to have a positive character because it frees me from negative states such as stress. Still, Walther would say, I may not have positive sentiments toward the room in feeling at home.

To clarify her point further, Walther contrasts *feeling at home* with *being used to* (*Gewohnheit*), which might appear to be, but *is not*, of the same kind as the former.

In [getting used to something], that feeling of inwardly “belonging to oneself” is missing, which characterizes the relation of the subject to the object in unification. In getting used to an object, too, this difference seems to us to be present, although it is especially difficult to hold on to it here because, so very often, unification is attached to getting used to. Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly getting used to without unification. It may happen, for example, that one is forced to rent a room with a most dreadful décor and to live in it for a long time. At first, one is constantly annoyed by one’s surroundings, but eventually one “gets used to” them, although one still finds them just as hideous as one was inwardly detached from them at the beginning. (Walther 1923: 47, my translation)

Again, she (possibly intentionally) leaves her example schematic. Her readers are invited to think about the décor they so heartily dislike and imagine getting used to that awful room. Let me refrain here from making my example specific so as not to provoke unnecessary blowback. In a situation like this, I am used to the room. However, I certainly

¹ To avoid misunderstanding, let us make sure that at stake here is *not* the belongingness in an institutional sense. My office somehow belongs to me in this sense even if I never feel at home in it. Walther here deals with *experiential* belongingness, which one may also call felt-to-belong-to-me-ness.

do not have any positive feelings because I can still wholeheartedly dislike the room. Such genuine negative sentiments must be impossible if my being used to the room is inner unification, namely a kind of positive feeling (I will soon deal with the notion of genuine sentiments in the next section).

In contrast with being used to, feeling at home removes negative sentiments. Assume that I eventually come to feel at home in the room. Then, I can no longer dislike or hate the room while my feeling persists. In this way, *inner unification, which is not in itself a positive sentiment, nevertheless eliminates negative sentiments* toward something or someone.

5. Responding to the Two Objections

Based on the ideas in the preceding two sections, it can be argued that Walther's affection-based account of communities *coherently* allows for internal conflict between community members. Indeed, some positive feelings might be incompatible with conflict. A narcissistic self-love, for example, might only be possible where no conflict with one-self occurs. We might have love with similar characteristics directed toward others. However, these sentiments are just (perhaps relatively small) part of positive feelings. As discussed in Section 4, positive feelings include inner unification, which eliminates negative feelings. Now, though very often not easy, we can disagree with, say, someone of a different political opinion without hostility toward them. Perhaps Walther would count such a disagreement as a specific case of conflict that she thinks makes a community somehow immune to the danger discussed in Section 3. Indeed, disagreements generally could easily get tainted with hostility. However, inner unification, which she finds on the ontological basis of a community, would prevent the taint to a certain extent.

Even more importantly, Walther's position, without abandoning its main points, can even accommodate the fact that sometimes a conflict within a community involves hostility. Her brief discussion of genuine (*echt*) and non-genuine (*unecht*) experiences makes it possible for her to hold that a community may allow internal conflict with hostility to a certain extent.

The distinction between genuine and non-genuine experiences, which is the key to making Walther's position more plausible, has a prehistory in the Munich tradition of

phenomenology.¹ Two pioneering works on this topic, by students of Pfänder, appear in 1910. In *Über Selbstgefühl*, Else Voigtländer deals with non-genuine or inauthentic (*uneigentlich*) feelings of self-worth (*Selbstgefühl*). In discussing such feelings, she also characterizes non-genuine experiences in general. According to her, non-genuine experience has contents stemming from me in a certain sense, but which somehow do not fit my personality, my character, or my “own essence [*eigenes Wesen*]” (cf. Voigtländer, 1910: 95–96).² In *Über Echtheit und Unechtheit von Gefühlen*, Willy Haas more intensively works on this topic. Focusing on non-genuine feelings, he describes those feelings as ones that do not match their subjects’ basic direction (*Grundrichtung*), namely the general mood of the mind (cf. Haas, 1910: 11–12; Uemura & Yaegashi, 2020: 69).³ Pfänder further takes up their students’ topic, describing non-genuine sentiments as not coming from their subjects’ “heart [*Herz*]” (cf. Pfänder, 1913: 387). He also outlines, with various examples, that the genuine/non-genuine distinction is extendable to the whole sphere of the mental (*Psychisches*) (cf. Pfänder, 1913: 399–404).⁴ It would be beyond the present aim to go further into details of their discussions of genuine and non-genuine experiences. Here, I shall make only one more point. As Pfänder remarks, characterizing an experience as *non-genuine* does not involve blame or negative evaluation (cf. Pfänder, 1913: 382). For instance, it is non-genuine but not (morally) blameworthy for someone with a grumpy personality to happen to have benevolence to someone else.

Walther’s original contribution in this context is to pluralize the criteria for the genuine/non-genuine distinction. Voigtländer, Haas, and Pfänder talk about genuine and non-genuine experiences only from the perspective of individuals. Despite differences concerning details, they all elucidate non-genuine experiences in terms of *mismatches with the individuals* who undergo those experiences. While accepting this idea, Walter further points out that individuals’ experiences can also be genuine or non-genuine from the perspective of *communities* to which they belong (Walther, 1923: 108–110). For ease of reference, let us call (non-)genuine experiences from the two perspectives *individually and communally (non-)genuine*, respectively. Then, we can formulate her idea roughly as follows: An experience of a subject is communally genuine just in case there is a

¹ On non-genuine sentiments, see also Vendrell Ferran 2008: 103–110 and Mulligan 2009.

² Further on Voigtländer’s discussion of non-genuine or inauthentic feeling of self-worth, see Vendrell Ferran 2020 and Salice 2023.

³ Voigtländer and Haas do not refer to each other’s work.

⁴ Strange enough, Pfänder ignores Voigtländer and mentions only Haas’ work when discussing genuine and non-genuine experience (cf. Pfänder, 1913: 382n1).

community such that the subject belongs to it, and it has rules or norms somehow violated by the experience.¹

Let us illustrate Walther's distinction.² Suppose I am a soldier who chases and catches an intruder into the base. As an individual, I may like this intruder who was, say, a good friend of mine in my childhood. However, such a circumstance is compatible with my hostility towards the intruder in the capture. This hostility could be *individually non-genuine* (at least if I am the sort of person who cares much about old friends). At the same time, it could also be *communally genuine* (at least if the community I belong to as a soldier has a norm for soldiers to confront intruders with hostility). Even in that case, my liking or benevolence towards the intruder would remain *individually genuine*.

Now, the considerations so far have paved the way to respond to the emptiness objection.³ Contrary to what initially appears to be, Walther's account of communities can accept (to a certain extent) ingroup conflict between community members. This idea does not make her position incoherent. Rather, as we have shown in Section 4, she has an account of how inner unification can save (to a certain extent) ingroup conflict from the taint of hostility. She also has an account that deals with hostility within a community as a communally *non-genuine* experience (see above in this Section). Thus, she is given the option that such communally non-genuine hostility does not lead the community to dissolution, at least as long as it remains to a certain degree.⁴ On this option, a mark of community is *the absence of communally genuine hostility* among its members. In other words, a community arises only if people share a certain norm that makes hostilities among them *non-genuine*. In other words, for Walther, a community is marked by sharing of such a norm. Supplemented by these ideas, Walther's concept of communities would apply to no small number of social groups. Indeed, developing these ideas further is a

¹ This formulation is rough because, for one thing, Walther considers the rules or norms that appear here in two ways. According to her, either they can be customs (*Sitten*) and traditions that the relevant community shares as a matter of fact in the community concerned, or they can be ideal for the community (cf. Walther, 1923: 110). Another thing worth pointing out here is that the notion of communal non-genuineness might have a normative character, which Pfänder explicitly denies of individually non-genuine sentiments or experiences (see above). Violating norms of a community, a communally non-genuine experience seems somehow blameworthy. Obviously, however, this blameworthiness is not (necessarily) moral. Note further that on Walther's characterization, a communally genuine experience may not be praiseworthy.

² The following is my own creation, inspired by Walter's example of a police officer arresting a thief, which she gives in a slightly different but relevant context (cf. Walther, 1923: 105).

³ The following response assumes that what Gurwitsch calls internal opposition is or involves that conflict between people which may accompany hostile sentiments. See the footnote 6 above.

⁴ Whether Walther was aware of this option is yet another question, which I do not attempt to answer because of the shortage of textual evidence. Also, I do not attempt to specify the degree to which a community allows for hostile conflicts in it.

task to be addressed elsewhere. However, even now, it should be clear that the first objection is uncharitable and thus not convincing.

Likewise, the pointlessness objection has already lost its force considerably. According to this objection, Walther's position makes internal unification superfluous from a sociological point of view. Whether a social group is grounded in inner unification, i.e., whether it is a community, does not provide interesting insights into the group's social structure—this is Gurwitsch's critique of Walther in this context. However, given the account of communally non-genuine experiences, Walther's position implies that the presence or absence of inner unification determines the group's social structure. According to this theory, a community member's (individually genuine) hostility towards other members can be communally non-genuine. Interaction based on such hostility should be described as a communally non-genuine social action. In this way, members' feelings influence the description of their behavior within the relevant community. By extension, one can describe a conflict observed in a social group as communally non-genuine if the relevant members have (habitual) inner unification with each other. In contrast, when it comes to social groups that are not communities, the notion of communally (non-)genuine experience does not apply to them. To take the above example of Walther, one cannot describe the hostility of the workers as communally non-genuine or genuine. In this way, introducing the communally genuine/non-genuine distinction can enrich the discussion of social structures. Indeed, how significant this idea can be will have to be discussed on another occasion. However, I hope to have shown the flaw in Gurwitsch's critique, on which the second objection is based.

Conclusion

In the present paper, I have attempted to clarify and defend Walther's account of communities by responding to the two objections one can find in Gurwitsch's criticism. According to her, for any community, inner unification sustains it and eliminates hostilities among its members. Contrary to what one initially may think, this idea does not imply that no conflict occurs between them. Rather, her account allows a community to have ingroup conflict *without communally genuine hostility*. Her notion of communal genuineness/non-genuineness makes it possible to remove the doubt that the category of communities as she defines it is sociologically pointless.

I would like to conclude the discussion by pointing out an important issue that has remained untouched in the present paper. According to Walther, inner unification removes not only hostility but also *indifference* (*Gleichgültigkeit*) between people (cf. Walther, 1923: 33 [2021: 294]). This claim may be contested. According to Voigtländer, inner unification involved in benevolence (*Wohlwollen*) is compatible with indifference toward someone to whom that sentiment is directed (Voigtländer, 1933: 145).¹ If this is the case, the same would probably hold for inner unification without sentiment. Since the present paper does not address this issue, my defense here is limited to that extent. Nevertheless, the present paper has hopefully shed light on still uninvestigated aspects of Walther's account of communities, which are equally interesting as its better-known ones.

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¹ For further on Voigtländer's discussion of benevolence and its different from love and her potential challenge to Walther, see Uemura 2023.

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