



GERDA WALTHER AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

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In this essay, I present a sketch of Gerda Walther's place within the early phenomenological movement. The purpose is threefold: 1) to present, in English, some vignettes from Walther's early academic career that help to situate her within the Munich-Freiburg milieu of phenomenologists; 2) to introduce readers to the major themes in her philosophy and how they are interconnected; 3) to set the stage for understanding her extant correspondence with Husserl. While much of the information contained herein is included in her autobiography—a book well known to German scholars as was considered an important historical document by the West German government and included in the collections of all school libraries—these personal details of Walther's life are supplemented with an overview of the philosophical concepts and problems central to her writings. It thereby serves as a point of entry into her phenomenological analyses of (i) the ego [*Ich*] and the person, (ii) social communities [*sozialen Gemeinschaften*], and (iii) mystical experience and abnormal psychology.

Keywords: Gerda Walther | Edmund Husserl | Alexander Pfänder | Social Ontology | Inner Joining | Pure ego | Abnormal Psychology

En este ensayo presento un boceto del sitio ocupado por Gerda Walther dentro del movimiento fenomenológico temprano. Mi intención tiene un triple propósito: 1) presentar en inglés algunas viñetas de la vida profesional temprana de Walther que nos permitan situarla en el medio de los fenomenólogos de Munich-Freiburg; 2) presentar al lector los principales temas de su filosofía y sus interconexiones; 3) preparar el escenario para entender su extensa correspondencia con Husserl. Si bien gran parte de la información presentada en este ensayo se encuentra en su autobiografía—un libro bien conocido por los estudiosos alemanes, considerado como un importante documento histórico por el gobierno de Alemania Occidental e incluido en el acervo de todas las bibliotecas escolares—, los detalles de la vida personal de Walther se complementan con una descripción general de los principales conceptos y problemas filosóficos que explora en sus escritos. De tal modo, este enfoque nos permite adentrarnos en sus análisis fenomenológicos de (i) el ego [*Ich*] y la persona, (ii) las comunidades sociales [*sozialen Gemeinschaften*], y (iii) la experiencia mística y la psicología de lo anormal.

Palabras clave: Gerda Walther | Edmund Husserl | Alexander Pfänder | Ontología social | Unión interna | Yo puro | Psicología de lo anormal

INTRODUCTION¹

While the work of the Munich phenomenologist Gerda Walther (1897-1977) has been the subject of renewed interest among philosophers working on social ontology—for example, Hans Bernhard Schmid² and Antonio Calcagno³—she remains a relatively obscure figure in the phenomenological movement. To understand the philosophical project and intellectual trajectory of Walther, it is important to consider the events of her life. Thankfully, Walther left us an extensive autobiography—*Zum anderen Ufer. Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*⁴—that offers glimpses into how her spiritual and academic journeys were intertwined. These memoirs act as both an important source of historical facts and as an interpretive lens through which to view her work. They are crucial to understanding Walther's contributions to phenomenology and her relationships with members of the phenomenological movement—including Edmund Husserl. The essay presented here is meant as a summary of Walther's academic career with special attention

¹ Research for this paper was conducted as part of Antonio Calcagno's project *Edith Stein and Gerda Walther: Law and Community in Early Phenomenology*, funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

² Hans B. Schmid, "Plural Action: Essays in Philosophy and Social Science", in *Contributions to Phenomenology*, n° 58, Dordrecht, Springer, 2009. And *Wir-Intentionalität: Kritik des ontologischen Individualismus und Rekonstruktion der Gemeinschaft*, n° 2, Auflage, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 2012.

³ Antonio Calcagno, "Gerda Walther. On the Possibility of a Passive Sense of Community and the Inner Time Consciousness of Community", in *Symposium*, n° 16 (2), 2012, pp. 89–105.

⁴ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, Remagen, Otto Reichl, 1960. In addition to Walther's autobiography, readers might also refer to Andreas Resch, *Gerda Walther*, Innsbruck, Resch, 1983; Linda Lopez McAlister, "Dr. Gerda Walther: German Feminist Philosopher", in Maja Pellikaan-Engel (ed.), *Against Patriarchal Thinking: Proceedings of the VIth Symposium of the International Association of Women Philosophers*, Amsterdam, VU University Press, 1992, pp. 65–69. And Mary E. Waithe (ed.), "Gerda Walther (1897-1977)", in *A History of Women Philosophers: Contemporary Women Philosophers, 1900-Today*, 4 vols, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1995, pp. 189–206. The present text aims to give additional context to Walther's biography by situating her within the phenomenological community.

paid to her relationships with figures associated with the phenomenological movement, both major and minor.⁵ Its purpose is to act as an introduction to her correspondence with Husserl, which is published subsequently to this text. That said, it also acts as an introduction to her contributions to phenomenology, which consists of her writings on (i) the ego [*Ich*] and the person, (ii) social communities [*sozialen Gemeinschaften*], and (iii) mystical experience and abnormal psychology.

In short, Walther's work on the ego and lived-experience [*Erlebnis*], which began as a reaction to Husserl's concept of the pure ego, elaborates on the notion of the self as a person, shaped by habits and social interactions, and that the self transcends the limits of the body and solipsistic experience. In her writings on social communities, Walther argues that the experience of community is grounded in the lived-experience of an inner joining or oneness [*inneren Einigung*], and that the phenomena of collective or we-intentionality is dependent on this inner joining. Finally, her interest in mystical experience, which is an extension of her interest in the self and how the self constitutes itself and the world around it in experience, deals with instances where the object of consciousness is something constituted by the subject as supernatural. In a sense, the mystical breaks with the traditional dichotomy between the immanent and the transcendent. Rather than treat such experiences as psychological aberrations reducible to disorders in the mind, she sought to examine them phenomenologically. However, Walther eventually fell out of favor with many of her peers due to her strong metaphysical convictions concerning mystical experiences and the work she conducted in the field of parapsychology, which consumed the bulk of her research efforts after 1928.

WALTHER'S LIFE AND WORK

Gerda Walther was born on 18 March 1897, in Nordrach, Germany. She was the daughter of Otto Walther a Jewish medical doctor and the founder of the Nordrach Clinic for the treatment of tuberculosis —and Ragnhild Bajer— his former patient and daughter of the Danish Nobel Peace Prize winner Fredrik Bajer. Ragnhild died in 1902 when Gerda was just 5 years old. At a young age, Walther became interested in Marxism and socialism, following the interests of her father. Otto Walther was a well-known social democrat and Marxist. He had met Friedrich Engels in London, and was an acquaintance of Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Adolf Geck, Rosa Luxemburg, Klara Zetkin, and other prominent members of the socialist

⁵ This sketch intentionally omits any detailed discussion of Walther's relationships with Stefan George, Percy Gothein, and others members of the George Circle and Munich Cosmic Circle. For more on Walther's relationship to the George Circle, see Günter Baumann, *Dichtung als Lebensform: Wolfgang Frommel zwischen George-Kreis und Castrum Peregrini*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1995, pp. 69-74.

movement in Germany.⁶ Inspired by her father, Walther began her studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in WS 1915/16 with the intention of focusing her studies on politics and sociology. She aspired to be a political agitator. However, during her first year in Munich, Walther came under the influence of Alexander Pfänder and her attention soon shifted to philosophy and psychology.⁷

Prior to attending Pfänder's lectures, Walther had no interest in questions concerning religion and the supernatural. These had been treated as nonsensical according to her atheistic, Marxist upbringing.⁸ It was Pfänder who, wary of all forms of dogmatism concerning the content of experience, suggested to her that, "A true philosopher, at least initially, should view it as an open question whether or not there is a God, try to clarify what is meant by 'God' and what people mean when they assert God's existence, and then seek to determine whether the assertion is justified or not."⁹ On the one hand, there is a metaphysical issue of the existence of God that the philosopher must seek to answer on rational grounds. On the other hand, there is the experience of God or of other religious and mystical phenomena that needs to be investigated in a systematic way. Questions about whether the intentional object of such experiences are "real", about the sociological and psycho-physical causes of feelings of religious ecstasy, and so on, are ones we can answer separately from an analysis of the phenomenological content of these experiences and what people mean when they talk about God, spirits, etc. It was with these types of considerations concerning the phenomenal content of experience in mind that Pfänder introduced Walther to the work of Edmund Husserl.¹⁰

From SS 1917 until SS 1919, Walther studied at the University of Freiburg with Husserl. Upon their first meeting, Husserl had his reservations about the student Pfänder had sent him. On the one hand, he was worried that the Munich phenomenologists had gotten "bogged down [*stecken geblieben*]" in the eidetic analysis of essences, and were doing metaphysics rather than phenomenology. "Ich weiß nicht, inwieweit man in München bei der Ontologie stehen geblieben ist, oder auch meine transzendente

⁶ Gerda Wather, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 20.

⁷ See the Appendix for a complete list of the courses Walther attended during her student years. Though it is not listed on her official course enrollment sheets, Walther also attended Pfänder's course *Grundzüge der Psychologie des Menschen* (WS 1915/16) Gerda Wather, *Ibid.*, p. 185. Her notebooks from this course can be found in her Nachlass at the Bavarian State Library [Ana 317 B.V.1.1(1-5)]. I would like to thank Dr. Nino Nodia for her valuable assistance in accessing Walther's Nachlass at the BSB. Parts of Walther's Nachlass that have not been consulted can be found at the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene in Freiburg.

⁸ Gerda Walther, *Phänomenologie der Mystik, zweiter, umgearbeitete Auflage*, Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau, Walter, 1955, pp. 16-19.

⁹ Linda López McAlister, "Dr. Gerda Walther: German Feminist Philosopher", art. cit., p. 196; Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 190-191.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-195.

Wendung mitgemacht hat?" she recalls Husserl asking.¹¹ He was pleased to learn that Walther had studied not only his Logical Investigations,¹² but also *Ideas I*,¹³ and that she was interested in continuing down the path of pure phenomenology. On the other hand, Husserl hesitated to take a self-proclaimed socialist and would-be political agitator into his circle of students.¹⁴ As a part of her vetting process, Husserl sent Walther to study first with his assistant, Edith Stein.

Walther became a member of Stein's "philosophical kindergarten" alongside Ilse Busse, Hans Proesler, Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, Otto Gründler, Amalie Jaegerschmid, Rudolf Meyer, and Nikolaus Thiel.¹⁵ Stein received her warmly, and promised to appease the master by training Walther in Husserlian phenomenology. During her stay in Freiburg, Walther not only attended Stein's "kindergarten" classes, but the lectures and seminars of Husserl, Heidegger, Joseph Geysler, and Jonas Cohn.¹⁶ She became a part of the inner circle of Husserl's students, which at that time included Stein, Roman Ingarden and Karl Löwith. In WS 1918/19, the *Freiburger phänomenologischen Gesellschaft* was established, and Löwith urged Walther to give the opening lecture. At the inaugural meeting chaired by Heidegger, Walther presented a paper titled "Zur Problematik von Husserls reinem Ich".¹⁷ Walther argued that in "bracketing" one had to forfeit the empirical person, and that the stream of consciousness of a pure ego is absolutely empty and devoid of content.¹⁸ She questioned how this pure ego could "intend" or cognize anything if it was devoid of content. The

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

¹² Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1900.

¹³ Edmund Husserl, "Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch. Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie", in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 1 (1), 1913, pp. 1–323.

¹⁴ Gerda Wather, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 203.

¹⁵ Walther would later review works by Meyer (Gerda Walther, "[Rezension] Rudolf Meyer, Goethe, der Heide und Christ", in *Zeitschrift für Seelenleben* XLII (1), 8, 1938) and Clauss (Gerda Walther, "[Rezension] Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss, Rasse und Seele", in *Zeitschrift für metapsychische Forschung* XI (1), 48, 1940), while Otto Gründler's book *Elemente zu einer Religionsphilosophie auf phänomenologischer Grundlage*, Munich, Kösel und Pustet, 1922, is mentioned in Walther's *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1923.

¹⁶ In the spring of 1918, Walther contracted measles and during the semester break she travelled to Jena to recover at the home of her half-brother, Heinz Walther. There she met and briefly studied phenomenology with Paul Ferdinand Linke (Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 219–220), a former student of Theodor Lipps in Munich and an early member of the Akademischen Vereins für Psychologie—the so-called "Munich Circle" of phenomenology. Linke began teaching in Jena in SS 1908, and in WS 1908/09, taught his first course on phenomenology: *Uebungen über Husserl's Logische Untersuchungen*. When Walther was in Jena in 1918, she would have attended Linke's lectures on *Philosophie als Ideenlehre or Das Problem der Allgemeinheit und Notwendigkeit*—the same lectures as Gerhard Scholem (see below).

¹⁷ Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 213–214; Edmund Husserl, Briefwechsel Bd. 2, *Die Münchener Phänomenologie*, Husserliana Dokumente III, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1994, p. 160.

¹⁸ Cf. Gerda Walther, *Ibid.*, p. 214.

discussion period that followed was taken up entirely by an argument between Husserl, Stein, and Heidegger. Heidegger believed that Walther had struck on an important weakness in Husserl's position.

Unfortunately, the manuscript for Walther's lecture "Zur Problematik von Husserls reinem Ich" was lost as it circulated among Husserl's students.¹⁹ That said, she takes up the issue of Husserl's concept of the pure ego again in her essay "Ludwig Klages und sein Kampf gegen den 'Geist'".²⁰ Walther argues that in order to understand Klages' concept of mind [*Geist*], one ought to compare his view with the teachings of "the sharpest [*scharfsinnigen*] and most consistent researcher of consciousness of our time, namely, Edmund Husserl".²¹ The first section of her essay consists precisely of such a comparison between Klages' works²² (Klages 1921) and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. Walther writes that Husserl strives to capture everything and everyone in the meshes of pure consciousness; that his constitutive phenomenology:

reduces [*aufzulösen*] even the smallest particle of the universe [*Weltalls*] to its mode of givenness [*Gegebenheitsweise*] in 'pure consciousness', until the whole world is finally pinned down and ordered in 'pure consciousness' just as poor butterflies on needles are placed in the glass box of a collector. There can hardly be a more consistent preacher of Panrationalism than he is.²³

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As in her earlier essay on the problem of the pure ego, Walther writes that the pure ego is a transcendence in the immanence of the stream of pure consciousness, that it is —by Husserl's own account— absolutely empty, indescribable, and devoid of content [*absolut leer, unbeschreiblich und inhaltslos*], and that it constitutes itself for itself as a "self" in pure time consciousness.²⁴ These characterizations of Husserl can be contrasted with Walther's own discussions of the ego-centre [*Ichzentrum*] and the "Grundwesen" of the three aspects of the human person —body [*Leib*], soul [*Seele*], and spirit [*Geist*].²⁵ Her correspondence with Husserl (below) and various items in her Nachlass also take up these issues. In this sense, we can think of her work on the ego and the person as one of her first phenomenological research projects.

During her time in Freiburg, Walther was asked to create an index of

¹⁹ Walther had proposed submitting an expanded version of this paper to the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*. See Pfänder's letter to Husserl from 17.I.1920. (Briefwechsel Bd. 2: *Die Münchener Phänomenologie*, ed. cit., p. 158.)

²⁰ Gerda Walther, "Ludwig Klages und sein Kampf gegen den 'Geist'" in *Philosophischer Anzeiger* 3 (1), pp. 48–90. This essay was translated into Spanish: "Ludwig Klages y su lucha contra el 'espíritu'", *Revista de Occidente* 87-88, Madrid, 1930, pp. 265-294; 117-136.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²² Ludwig Klages, *Vom Wesen des Bewusstseins: Aus einer lebenswissenschaftlichen Vorlesung*, Leipzig, Barth, 1921.

²³ Gerda Walther, "Ludwig Klages und sein Kampf gegen den 'Geist'", ed. cit., pp. 51-52.

²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

²⁵ Cf. *Ídem*, and *Phänomenologie der Mystik*, ed. cit.

terms/glossary [*Sachregister*] for the second edition of Husserl's *Ideas I* — a task which Heidegger and others believed was badly needed.²⁶ Her main concern in this undertaking was to answer the question of whether Husserl was an epistemological realist or idealist — the question which divided Husserl's students. Under her entry for "phenomenological idealism," Walther included two sets of passages: those which appeared to support idealism (pro) and those which seemed to be against idealism (contra).²⁷ In sorting the passages, she attempted to follow Husserl's own criteria for distinguishing pure phenomenology from traditional philosophical idealism. Husserl had taught that everything that is grasped by consciousness is constituted in consciousness, and resolutely rejected any representational theory [*Abbildtheorie*] that would assert that consciousness depicts some mind-independent reality.²⁸ At the same time, he claimed that the objects of consciousness, including the external world, are not created or produced by consciousness. Such claims are metaphysical ones, and for Husserl had no place in phenomenology (Walther 1960, 215). Walther weighed all these considerations while compiling her index and interpreting Husserl's text. The index with published in 1923, but was later replaced by a shorter one compiled by Ludwig Landgrebe. Walther claimed that her index was removed because she had fallen out of Husserl's favour, likely due to her work in parapsychology, though she speculated that it may have also been due to her entries on "phenomenological idealism."

Walther's turn toward mysticism, abnormal psychology, and the supernatural is worth discussing, even if we can only do so in broad strokes. An important event occurred in Walther's life during her time in Freiburg which initiated her journey toward a serious study of supernatural experience. In November of 1918, Walther underwent an intense spiritual encounter on a train from her parent's home to Freiburg. Walther's father was in poor health, and she had become more and more distressed about his illness. Walther herself was beginning to suffer from depression and worried that she was going insane.²⁹ Alone with her thoughts on the train, Walther could feel herself sinking into darkness, until all of a sudden she was touched by a presence that, by her own reminiscence, enveloped her in a sense of warmth and goodness — an experience which she had difficulty describing

²⁶ Gerda Walther, *Ausführliches Sachregister zu Edmund Husserls „Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie“* Bd. 1, Halle, Niemeyer, 1923.

²⁷ "Besonders wichtig war mir das Problem, ob Husserl erkenntnistheoretischer Realist oder Idealist (wie viele behaupteten) sei und ich trug alle Äußerungen zugunsten jeder der beiden Auffassungen zusammen." (Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 214.)

²⁸ "Allerdings lehrte Husserl, daß alles, um vom Bewußtsein erfaßt zu werden, sich im Bewußtsein 'konstituieren', von ihm 'vermeint', 'intendiert' werden muß, was ja eigentlich eine Selbstverständlichkeit ist. (Die Abbildtheorie, wonach das Bewußtsein die Wirklichkeit abbildet, lehnte er entschieden ab.)" (*Ibid.*, pp. 214-215)

²⁹ Otto Walther passed away on 6 April, 1919.

or accounting for given her atheistic upbringing.³⁰ The presence stayed with her throughout the remainder of the train ride, and continued after she had returned to her apartment in Freiburg. Once home, she fell to her knees in front of her bed, and pressed her face into her pillow —overcome by the force acting on her. A bright inner glow [*innerer Lichtschein*] streamed toward her from an immeasurable distance [*unermeßlichen Ferne*], and obliterated all the feelings of pain and sorrow she had ever experienced. It was as if those experiences had happened to a stranger. All she could feel was the warm love that had embraced her, and the spiritual light [*geistige Licht*] that had penetrated her. As the presence gradually left her, Walther wondered if she had been touched by God. She was convinced that whatever had caused those feelings in her did not originate from her, and that she had been moved by something other-worldly and Divine³¹.

The incident on the train marks a complicated change in Walther's understanding of the world. On the one hand, it caused her to become interested in psychosis, and on the other, in the paranormal. In both cases this was perhaps a direct result of her own break from reality. This change in Walther was the eventual source of both sympathy and scorn from members of the phenomenological movement. Walther wrote to Pfänder about her "plunge into another world" [*Sturz in die andere Welt*], and he initially took her experience seriously as a genuine religious experience, though he would later attempt to dissuade her from pursuing the study of parapsychology —religious experience was one thing, but clairvoyance, ghosts, and so on were another. Husserl, on the other hand, had no time for the mystical, and according to Walther he refused to even acknowledge the possibility of a proof of the existence of God.³² While talk of the "supernatural" and the religious in an epistemic sense (that is, those external phenomena that cannot be explained and understood in terms of physical nature) might be acceptable for phenomenological analyses, the supernatural understood in

³⁰ "Doch wie ich so sank, strömte mir plötzlich aus weiter, unendlicher Ferne etwas entgegen, etwas, das mich mit einem Gefühl tiefster Geborgenheit und Sicherheit durchdrang, —doch konnte ich nicht erkennen, was es war. Es nahm zu an Stärke, ein Meer von warmer Liebe und Güte umfing mich. In diesem Zustand verharrte ich längere Zeit. Der Zug hielt: Freiburg! Ich war am Ziel meiner Reise angelangt. So war ich doch nicht dem Tod oder einer Geisteskrankheit verfallen! Aber jenes ganz andere, ungekannte, unfaßbare 'Etwas' hatte ich gefunden, sonst wäre ich unterwegs dennoch geistig oder körperlich zugrunde gegangen —oder beides." (*Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.)

³¹ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 225–26.

³² "Es war immerhin ein großes Glück, daß Pfänder das, was ich ihm gleich anschließend an mein Erleben über meinen "Sturz in die andere Welt" geschrieben hatte, wenigstens ernst nahm und als ein Eintauchen in den "Wesensgrund" (wie er das Göttliche nannte) gelten ließ. Ich sprach damals sonst zu keinem Menschen von diesen Dingen als etwas Selbst-erlebtem. Husserl hatte ja gesagt, an der Mystik sei wohl nur die Liebe der Mystiker eine wirkliche, "leibhaftige Gegebenheit", nicht aber das Göttliche, das sie zu erleben beanspruchen. Er lehnte es ab, hier auch nur die Möglichkeit eines Gottesbeweises anzuerkennen. Dieser lag für ihn am ehesten in der wunderbaren Tatsache, daß die "Intentionen" und "transzendentalen Leitfäden" des Bewußtseins sich durch "originäre Gegebenheiten" erfüllten, also irgendwie auf einander abgestimmt waren." (*Ibid.*, p. 260.)

a metaphysical sense was no longer phenomenology.³³ Despite the general disapproval her newfound interests garnered from her peers and mentors, Walther concluded that her experience on the train, and a series of others which followed over the next 24 months,³⁴ were “supernatural”. This was the impetus for her eventual conversion to Christianity and her interest in mystical experiences.

Early in 1920, Walther wrote a 52 page manuscript titled “Ein Beitrag zur (*bewusstseinsmäßigen*) inneren Konstitution des eigenen Grundwesens als Kernpunkt der Persönlichkeit (und Gottes).”³⁵ A version of this work was presented to Pfänder in honour of his 50th birthday in February of 1920, and served as the basis for her *Phänomenologie der Mystik*.³⁶ While still inspired by phenomenology and psychology, because she lacked the vocabulary needed to describe her personal mystical experiences, Walther became interested in the work of Rudolf Steiner,³⁷ particularly his description of auric clairvoyance [*aurischen Hellsehens*]. Around this time Walther also befriended the graphologist and actress Jesta Berg, who introduced her to Freudian psychoanalysis and non-mainstream areas of psychological research.³⁸ In the summer of 1920, Walther also had a strange experience which one might call a premonition. At the time, Walther had an admirer by the name of Erich Taube to whom she was almost engaged, but never married. While on a hiking trip, Walther reports that she saw into the core

³³ As Ales Bello notes, Walther writes that “mysticism, according to Husserl, concerns ‘ideal possibilities’ and that the sole real thing is the experience of the mystical; one cannot, however, establish the reality of the ‘object’ of which one had an experience. Husserl, therefore, could not discuss the subjective aspect of mystical experience, but he doubts that one really places oneself in relation with a divinity.” (Ales Bello. *The Divine in Husserl and Other Explorations*, in *Analecta Husserliana*, n° 98, Dordrecht, Springer, 2009, p. 68. Trans. Antonio Calcagno). Walther writes, “Als das Büchlein dann erschienen war [1923], mußte ich jedoch erleben, wie einige meiner philosophischen Lehrer, selbst der von mir so verehrte Edmund Husserl, in diesen Dingen nicht etwa Schilderungen von Realitäten, sondern bestenfalls »ideale Möglichkeiten« sahen. Husserl meinte, das einzig Wirkliche sei hier das Erleben der Mystiker, ihre Liebesglut, nicht aber deren »Objekt.«” (Gerda Walther, *Phänomenologie der Mystik*, ed. cit., pp. 16-17). Put slightly differently, while we may not be able to establish the reality of the object of a mystical experience (though, in some cases we may be able to establish its lack of Objective reality), since people genuinely understand themselves to have mystical experiences (even if I myself cannot share in them and do not have them myself), Husserl was open to the idea that they are, at least subjectively, real experiences.

³⁴ For instance, Walther speaks of sensing an “eerie presence” [unheimliche “Anwesenheit”], which may have been a ghost, while staying at her aunt’s estate in Dreiskau (Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*. ed. cit., pp. 261-262).

³⁵ Ana 317 A.III.2.1.

³⁶ Gerda Walther, *Phänomenologie der Mystik*, ed. cit., Also Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 263-264. This work should not be confused with her essay on “On the Psychology of Telepathy” (*Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, n° 25 (10), pp. 438–460.) which, as she indicates in the first footnote, was rejected from inclusion in the Pfänder-Festschrift (Ernst Heller and Friedrich Löw (eds.), *Neue Münchener philosophische Abhandlungen: Alexander Pfänder zu seinem sechzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, Leipzig, Barth, 1933.)

³⁷ Steiner had been a student of Franz Brentano, and considered himself a phenomenologist.

³⁸ Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 254-256.

of his being, and therein could see the image of a woman—a woman that was not her.³⁹ Feeling that Taube was meant to be with someone else, she ended their romance. This cluster of events from 1918-1920 form the background for her later work in parapsychology.

Walther returned to Munich in the fall of 1919 to finish working on her dissertation in the middle of her mystical turn. She enrolled in courses with Pfänder, Moritz Geiger, Aloys Fischer, Max Weber, and Clemens Baeumker,⁴⁰ met with August Gallinger, and became close friends with Eugen Claassen. Her original intention for her doctoral thesis was to explore issues of social determinism and individual free will—issues that harken back to her early interests in Hegelian and Marxist philosophy, particularly the work of Max Adler and Weber. However, Walther's topic shifted to a study of social communities from both an ontological and phenomenological perspective, though not fully leaving behind its Marxist roots. Husserl encouraged Walther to focus her work on the external constitution of communities in consciousness [*die "äußere Bewußtseins-Konstitution der Gemeinschaften"*]. Walther wanted to incorporate Pfänder's analysis of sentiments [*Gesinnungen*] such as love and friendship, and his notion of inner joining or "oneness" [*inneren Einigung*] into this work, since she took the latter to be an essential characteristic of "we-experiences".⁴¹ Walther's use of the term "inner joining" takes on a more nuanced meaning than the type of emotional contagion with respect to the sharing of values that Pfänder describes (or we might think of it as a harmony). As Antonio Calcagno writes, Walther, "claimed that what makes us conscious of experiencing community is what she called a lived experience of *Einigung*, or oneness. What is proper to my mental experience of a community is the living experience of a profound similarity and unity of mind with an other. Her argument is that any full and real experience of community must be defined in terms of this conscious, lived experience of being one with others, being similar to them and feeling together as one."⁴²

Walther's phenomenological approach to the study of social communities took as its starting point the notion that human beings are, at their core,

³⁹ "Jedoch hatte ich ein seltsames Erlebnis, wie es mir auch im späteren Leben nur selten zuteil wurde. Mir war, als schaute ich in nicht näher erklärbarer Weise mitten durch Erich hindurch in sein Inneres, und wahrte dort - aber nicht als Bild - die Züge einer Frau. Ich "wußte", daß diese Frau zu ihm gehörte, und daß nicht ich diese Frau war." (*Ibid.*, p. 268.)

⁴⁰ Walther's unpublished promotion materials indicate that she was encouraged to enroll in the following courses in order to satisfy the requirements for her degree: "Geschichte der Philosophie nach Kant - Baeumker; Psychologie - Baeumker; Geschichte der Philosophie bis Kant - Becher; Erkenntnislehre - Becher; Logik - Pfänder; Phänomenologie oder Metaphysik - Pfänder. Walther dropped the courses with Becher and had an oral exam instead." (*Ibid.*, p. 276.)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244. Cf. Alexander Pfänder, "Zur Psychologie der Gesinnungen. Erster Artikel." *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 1 (1) 1913: pp. 366-394. Walther was not the only follower of Pfänder to be interested in his notion of "inneren Einigung." Ludwig Binswanger, Alfred Schwenninger, and Wolfgang Trillhaas all utilized this concept in their work.

⁴² Antonio Calcagno, "Gerda Walther. On the Possibility of a Passive Sense of Community and the Inner Time Consciousness of Community." *Symposium*, n° 16 (2), 2012, pp. 89-105.

social and political animals who are often motivated to action by feelings, rather than isolated egos which form collectives due to rational deliberation. Feelings, such as that of inner joining, are therefore not only important for motivating us to act, but are central to the formation of social bonds and human flourishing. Her analysis of the essence of community and the manner in which we know others or experience the mental lives of others [*Fremdseelischen*] was influenced by the work of Edith Stein and Max Scheler, and perhaps even by Husserl's Ideas II, which he presented selections of to his students during Walther's time in Freiburg.⁴³ However, unlike Husserl and Stein, Walther believed that intersubjectivity and community is grounded in some direct inner connection between human beings, and that, following Pfänder, material groups of individuals are an external expression of that inner connection.

It is worth noting that by the time Walther had returned to Munich, she had already started to part ways politically from her Marxist comrades. Adolf Geck had asked her to be an editor for a Social Democratic newspaper, but she was compelled to decline. Her official response was that she needed to focus on completing her dissertation, but he also felt that she could no longer support their negative views on religion and the church. She also felt her energy would be better spent promoting the cause of women's right to habilitate, something that the party supported but did not consider a pressing issue.⁴⁴ However, she had not completely abandoned all her earlier views, and now turned to Hegel, believing that Marx and the Left Hegelians (Feuerbach, Stirner, etc.) had misinterpreted Hegel's writings on the relationship between the world-spirit and Absolute spirit.⁴⁵

On 10 March, 1921 Walther defended her dissertation, *Ein Beitrag zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften (mit einem Anhang zur Phänomenologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften)*.⁴⁶ She was awarded her doctorate summa cum laude, and the text was published with a slightly altered title in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* in 1923.⁴⁷ Walther remained in Munich for some time after completing her degree, and continued to attend Pfänder's lectures, though the students found her a bit eccentric due to her interest in telepathy and her belief in her own psychic abilities.⁴⁸ In October 1922, she moved to Heidelberg with the intention of beginning her habilitation under the supervision of Karl Jaspers.⁴⁹ While in Heidelberg, she also studied with

⁴³ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 213, 271-272.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁴⁶ Gerda Walther, *Ein Beitrag zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften (mit einem Anhang zur Phänomenologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften)*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1922.

⁴⁷ Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik*, ed. cit.

⁴⁸ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 281-283.

⁴⁹ On 24. X. 1922, Husserl wrote a letter of recommendation on Walther's behalf to Jaspers

Heinrich Rickert.⁵⁰ Due to financial turmoil, Walther did not finish her habilitation. Nevertheless, the years immediately following the completion of her dissertation gave birth to what we might consider her magnum opus —*Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik*.⁵¹ In this work, Walther moves from an analysis of the essence of the person to the possibility of direct experience with the Divine. Anthony Steinbock summarizes the content of this work as follows:

Not wanting to share in the prejudices peculiar to psychologism or empiricism, not wanting to reduce spiritual phenomena to quantifiable facts in the natural sciences, she remained faithful to the early spirit of phenomenology in Husserl and Pfänder. Guided by the experiences of several mystics, she recognized in her *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik* 'a mode of givenness that is fundamentally different,' an irreducible 'spiritual givenness' that is peculiar to the 'primordial phenomenon' of mystical experience as the primordial source of religious experience. In so doing, she brought to light basic structural features of mystical experience and examined how such experiences are possible.⁵²

In the summer of 1923, Walther received an invitation from Hedwig Conrad-Martius to visit the Conrad's farm in Bergzabern.⁵³ Walther had been introduced to the work of Conrad-Martius by Pfänder as early as 1916,⁵⁴ and refers to Conrad-Martius in her dissertation —in particular *Zur Ontologie und Erscheinungslehre der realen Aussenwelt, Von der Seele: Die Unterredenden: Montanus und Psilander*, and *Metaphysische Gespräche*—⁵⁵ but the two had not previously met. This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between the two women. The influence of Conrad-Martius on *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik* is abundantly clear.⁵⁶ However,

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(Edmund Husserl, Briefwechsel Bd. 6: Philosophenbriefe, Husserliana Dokumente III, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1994. p. 201).

⁵⁰ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., pp. 333-334.

⁵¹ Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zur Phänomenologie der Mystik*, ed. cit.

⁵² Anthony Steinbock, *Phenomenology and Mysticism: The Verticality of Religious Experience*, Bloomington-Indiana University Press, 2000, p. 29.

⁵³ Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 331-333; Andreas Resch, *Gerda Walther*, Innsbruck, Resch, 1983, p. 26.

⁵⁴ Walther mentions Conrad-Martius in her notebooks for Pfänder's *Einführung in die Philosophie* (WS 1916/17) [Ana 317 B.V.1.3(1-3)].

⁵⁵ Hedwig Conrad-Martius, "Zur Ontologie und Erscheinungslehre der realen Aussenwelt", in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* 3, 1916, pp. 345–542; "Von der Seele: Die Unterredenden: Montanus und Psilander", in *Summa* 1 (2), 1917, pp. 106–36; *Metaphysische Gespräche*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1921.

⁵⁶ Both the first and second edition of Walther's *Phänomenologie der Mystik* refer to the work of Conrad-Martius, and Walther notes in the second edition that she was inspired to return to this work in part due to the encouragement of Conrad-Martius. During the 1950s, Walther's interest in Conrad-Martius seems to have peaked. She publishes reviews of Conrad-Martius' *Die Zeit* ("[Rezension] Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Die Zeit*." *Neue Wissenschaft* 4 (8/9), 1954, pp. 285–87) and *Utopien der Menschenzüchtung* ("[Rezension] Hedwig Conrad-Martius, *Utopien der Menschenzüchtung*, *Der Sozialdarwinismus und seine Folgen*", in *Natur und Kultur* 48, 1956, p. 148), and discusses her in "Die innerseelische Seite parapsychologischer Phänomene", *Neue Wissenschaft: Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie* 6 (11/12), 1956, pp. 364–73. Walther also contributed an essay to the Conrad-Martius Festschrift ("Zum Problem der Visionen", *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 66, 1958, pp. 347–354).

while the work was well received by some of her colleagues, Heidegger—who had previously commended Walther’s sensibilities for her attack on Husserl—did not view the text so fondly. In his 1923 lecture course, “Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity,” Heidegger states:

Phenomenological research, which was supposed to provide a basis for scientific work, has sunk to the level of wishy-washiness, thoughtlessness, and summariness, to the level of the philosophical noise of the day, to the level of a public scandal of philosophy. The industry surrounding schools and their students has blocked the avenues of access for actually taking up phenomenology and doing it. The George circle, Keyserling, anthroposophy, Steiner, etc. —everything absorbs phenomenology. How far it has gone is shown by a recent book, *Phenomenology of Mysticism*, which appeared with an authorized publisher and with the most official sponsorship.⁵⁷

In Heidegger’s eyes, Walther was representative of the betrayal of phenomenology and its possibilities, of everything that had gone wrong in phenomenological research in the wake of Husserl’s turn to transcendental idealism, in both the realist and idealist camps.

Near the end of 1923, Walther left Heidelberg to live with relatives in Denmark. Before finally arriving in Copenhagen in January of 1924, she first went to Berlin and visited with Hermann Vollmer—the cousin of Philipp Schwarz—who Walther knew from Pfänder’s seminars in Munich.⁵⁸ Her stay abroad was a short one, and in the spring of 1924, Walther returned to Germany and took up a job as a nurse’s assistant at a clinic in Berlin. A few months later she took up a position as a ghost-writer for Katharina von Oheimb.⁵⁹ In February of 1925, she moved to live with relatives in Leipzig and began working for a book dealer, and then as a translator. It was at this time that she wrote and published her essay, *Zur Psychologie der sogenannten ‘moral insanity’*.⁶⁰ While she did not enroll at the university, she began attending the lectures of Hans Dreisch as a *Schwarzhörerin*⁶¹. Walther had kept in contact with Pfänder, and he asked his close friend and fellow Munich phenomenologist, Alfred Schwenninger, who worked in a mental hospital in

⁵⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Ontology. The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999. p. 58. Trans. John van Buren. For more on this, see Dermot Moran, “Choosing a Hero: Heidegger’s Conception of Authentic Life in Relation to Early Christianity”, in Sean J. McGrath and Andrzej Wierciński (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger’s Phenomenology of Religious Life*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2010, pp. 349–75.

⁵⁸ Cfr. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 334. More on Philipp Schwarz below. Walther had assumed that Vollmer would attempt to Habilitate in Berlin working on Pfänder’s psychological writings, but due to the rising tide of anti-Semitism, he did not (Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 345).

⁵⁹ Cfr. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 375; Ana 317 B.II.3

⁶⁰ Gerda Walther, “Zur Psychologie der sogenannten ‘moral insanity’”, in *Japanisch-deutsche Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Technik*, n° 3, 1925, pp. 174–184.

⁶¹ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit. p. 376.

Baden if he could arrange for Walther to get a position. Schwenninger knew Walther as a “novice phenomenologist [*Nachwuchsphänomenologin*],” and arranged for her to work as a secretary for Willy Hellpach at the state mental hospital in Emmendingen.⁶² Both Pfänder and Husserl wrote reference letters on her behalf. While there, Walther became interested in schizophrenia, and sought to discredit the claim that mystical experience is nothing but a form of mental illness.⁶³ The result of her research into this topic was the paper “Zur innen psychischen Struktur der Schizophrenie”,⁶⁴ which was accepted for presentation at the 1926 meeting of the Southwest German Psychiatric Association. These works on abnormal psychology bring together aspects of her previous work on community and social values with her interests in mystical experience.

In attendance at the congress of the Southwest German Psychiatric Association was Hanz Prinzhorn, whom Walther then went to work for as a research assistant, helping to prepare his book *Das Weltbild*.⁶⁵ In 1928, Hans Driesch referred Walther to the psychiatrist and parapsychologist Albert von Schrenck-Notzing,⁶⁶ who was in need of an assistant.⁶⁷ She became his last scientific secretary, assisting him in his investigation of the physical mediums Willi and Rudi Schneider, and his work on telekinesis and materialization. Walther also worked on the editions of *Schrenck-Notzing's* posthumously published *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Parapsychologie*,⁶⁸ *Die Entwicklung des Okkultismus zur Parapsychologie in Deutschland*,⁶⁹ and *Die Phänomene des Mediums Rudi Schneider*.⁷⁰ From then on, Walther's work focussed almost exclusively on parapsychology.⁷¹

After the sudden death of Schrenck-Notzing in February 1929, Walther expanded her study of parapsychic activity to include telepathy and

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 382-383.

⁶³ Linda Lopez McAlister, *op. cit.* p. 68.

⁶⁴ Gerda Walther, “Zur innenpsychischen Struktur der Schizophrenie”, in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, n° 108, 1927, pp. 56–85.

⁶⁵ Hans Prinzhorn, *Das Weltbild*, Potsdam, Müller und Kiepenheuer, 1927.

⁶⁶ Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 406.

⁶⁷ Interestingly, Schrenck-Notzing had been a student of Theodor Lipps and was a member of the Akademischen Vereins für Psychologie in Munich alongside Pfänder in WS 1895/96. I would like to thank Prof. Wolfhart Henckmann for pointing this out to me.

⁶⁸ Albert Schrenck-Notzing, v. 1929. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Parapsychologie: Mit einer Einführung von Hans Driesch*. Stuttgart, Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1929; and *Grundfragen der Parapsychologie*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1962.

⁶⁹ Albert Schrenck-Notzing, *Die Entwicklung des Okkultismus zur Parapsychologie in Deutschland*, Leipzig, Mutze, 1932.

⁷⁰ Albert v. Schrenck-Notzing, *Die Phänomene des Mediums Rudi Schneider*, Berlin, DeGruyter, 1933.

⁷¹ Even her phenomenological publications after this point, such as Gerda Walther, “Die Bedeutung der phänomenologischen Methode Edmund Husserls für die Parapsychologie”, in *Psychophysikalische Zeitschrift*, n° 1, 1955, pp. 22-29, 37-40, tend to focus on parapsychological issues.

clairvoyance. She began lecturing on parapsychology across Europe and North America, and from 1929 through the 1930s published numerous articles and reviews in the *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie*, and the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*. She also became the editor of the Dutch journal *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie*, founded by W. H. C. Tenhaeff. In 1938, perhaps in part due to her past as a socialist agitator and her writings in both phenomenology and parapsychology, she was ordered to appear before the Nazi authorities. The official reason given was that her name had appeared on a list of contributors to a Dutch periodical, *Menschen Kosmos*, which was allegedly edited by a Jew. She ceased all contact with the journal, but her article, "De Oud-Germaansche heldensagen in het licht parapsychologie" was published under the pseudonym F. Johansen in 1939.

At the outbreak of WWII, Walther was forced into national service and was assigned to work in the Foreign Postal Censorship office. In June of 1941, she was arrested by the Gestapo and jailed for several weeks. She was interrogated concerning her acquaintance with Kurt Eisner—a leader in the Socialist Revolution in Munich 1918—though she later found out that her imprisonment was part of the "Aktion Rudolf Hess," which singled-out individuals associated with the occult. Her home was ransacked and many of her writings were confiscated. Despite her Jewish heritage and these brushes with German authorities, Walther survived the Third Reich, and remained at her job in the Censorship office until 1944. That same year, Walther converted to Roman Catholicism. Her home and possessions were destroyed during the war, and she was forced to leave Munich. Walther did not return to the city and her work until 1949, resulting in a near decade long gap in her publications.⁷² In the 1950s, she began publishing regularly in the journals *Neue Wissenschaft* and *Natur und Kultur*, and continued her work on parapsychology until her death in *Diessen am Ammersee* on 6 January 1977. Despite her insightful contributions to phenomenology in *Zur Ontologie der sozialen Gemeinschaften*, *Phänomenologie der Mystik*, and her early articles on abnormal psychology, Walther was almost completely ostracized from the phenomenological community due to her affiliation with the parapsychological movement.

We cannot know for sure whether intense psychological distress and depression caused Walther to suffer a psychotic break in November of 1918 that led to her beliefs in both the supernatural and the paranormal. However, it is clear that her phenomenological works break with reality as we normally conceive of it, that is, with the usual binaries and dichotomies we employ when describing reality. In her work on communities, Walther argues (combining insights from Pfänder's theory of sentiments and his concept of "inner joining" [inneren Einigung], with Husserl's intentional background theory and his nascent thoughts on habitus) that a community is essentially grounded in a concrete intentional background that arises through habitual

⁷² A comprehensive bibliography for Walther compiled by Eberhard Avé-Lallemant can be found in Andreas Resch, *Gerda Walther*, ed. cit.

joining [habituelle Einigung]. She goes beyond the radical division between the I and the other, and develops a notion of collective or we-intentionality.⁷³ And while one might criticize her writings on mysticism for their often opaque language and limited focus on Christian mysticism,⁷⁴ her work attempts to go beyond our view of the person as an isolated body and mind, and to extend the scope of possible experiences. Her belief in the paranormal, particularly her own psychic abilities, was perhaps a fair point of ridicule (presuming she was not suffering from mental illness), but is no reason to overlook her genuinely insightful contributions to phenomenology and philosophy more broadly.

WALTHER'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH HUSSERL⁷⁵

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In her correspondence with Husserl from 18.V.1920, Walther begins by explaining that she had received an earlier letter from Husserl written in Gabelsberger shorthand, which she had some difficulty reading. Fortunately, the sister of her landlady was familiar with this style of writing and helped her to understand its contents in broad strokes. Technical philosophical vocabulary could not be deciphered with confidence. In his earlier letter, Husserl inquired after numerous students from Munich, specifically Maximilian Beck, Gerhard Scholem, and Philipp Schwarz. Husserl was interested in a criticism originating among the Munich students concerning his method of imaginative variation [Methode des Umfingierens]. Walther indicates that this criticism was originally raised by Scholem based on his reading of Erna Halle's notes from Husserl SS 1919 lectures on *Natur und Geist* (lectures which Walther had also attended).⁷⁶ According to his understanding of Husserl's method of imaginative variation, Scholem argued that through variation on a particular one can never reach the *Eidos*. Walther attempted to explain that the essence of a thing is not given separate from "the thing [*Dies da*]" according to the phenomenologist, but Scholem took this to be begging the question. Before turning to the rest of the letter, let us first briefly discuss the relationship of each of Schwarz and Scholem to phenomenology.

Philipp Schwarz was a member of the Munich Circle, and was also a

⁷³ Cf. Emanuele Caminada, "Joining the Background: Habitual Sentiments Behind We-Intentionality", in Anita Konzelmann Ziv and Hans B. Schmid (eds.), *Institutions, Emotions, and Group Agents*, 195–212, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014.

⁷⁴ Henry Corbin, "[Review] Gerda Walther, *Phänomenologie der Mystik*, zweite, umgearbeitete Auflage", in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, n° 153 (1), 1958, pp. 92–101.

⁷⁵ Translated below are two of the items from the Husserl-Walther correspondence (Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel Bd. 2, Die Münchener Phänomenologie*. ed. cit). Since the publication Husserl's *Briefwechsel*, more letters between he and Walther have been discovered.

⁷⁶ Erna Halle had studied in Freiburg from SS 1919 -WS 1919/20, and had attended Husserl's lectures. She later married Werner Kraft (1896-1991).

close friend of Theodor Conrad, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Alfred von Sybel, and Jean Hering. According to Herbert Spiegelberg, Schwarz should be remembered among Pfänder's students for his "careful workmanship."⁷⁷ He first studied philosophy in Göttingen, though he does not appear to have studied with Husserl at that time. However, Husserl did have a copy of his dissertation *Bolzanos Vorstellungstheorie und Kants Raumanschauung*.⁷⁸ Schwarz arrived in Munich circa 1916, after two years of military service in World War I, to study mathematics and philosophy. After "shopping around among other Munich philosophers, [Schwarz] was captured immediately by Pfänder's *Psychologie* (or *Einleitung*), less by Geiger,"⁷⁹ and he and his sister Hannah both became disciples of Pfänder. He spent the 1921-22 academic year in Freiburg, taking courses with Husserl and Heidegger. In his letter to Husserl on 1.1.1921, Schwarz asks if he might be allowed to come to Freiburg to attend his lectures on Logic. Schwarz had already planned to come to Freiburg in the summer of 1921, but upon learning about the lectures on transcendental logic from Arnold Metzger, Schwarz hoped he might be permitted to arrive earlier.⁸⁰ These lectures were the first iteration of what would later be known as Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*. By the time of Walther's correspondence with Husserl, Schwarz had already arrived in Freiburg.⁸¹

Gerhard Scholem's first exposure to phenomenology was through the lectures and seminars of Paul F. Linke at the University of Jena in 1917. He attended Linke's lecture course *Philosophie als Ideenlehre*, which would act as an introduction to phenomenology and the school of Husserl [*eine Einleitung in den Gedankenkreis der Husserlschen Schule (Phänomenologie)*], and his seminar "Das Problem der Allgemeinheit und Notwendigkeit from Hume to Husserl".⁸² Scholem was fond of Linke, who he describes as "an exuberantly cheerful phenomenologist who was very open and obliging to young people, though he was not particularly respected as a member of [the phenomenological] school."⁸³ Linke had suggested that Scholem write his

⁷⁷ Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 2 vols, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1965. p. 193.

⁷⁸ Philipp Schwarz, *Bolzanos Vorstellungstheorie und Kants Raumanschauung*, Göttingen, Hofer, 1911.

⁷⁹ Herbert Spiegelberg, "Meeting with Philipp Schwarz on 3/4/1962," in *Scraps and Notes about Interviews with various Philosophers, Psychologists, Psychiatrists etc.*, ca. 1962 (unpublished). Spiegelberg also notes here that Schwarz "got his cousin Hermann Vollmer interested in Pfänder." After being deported to the Pyrenees by the Nazi regime in 1935, Schwarz returned to Berlin to work as a school teacher.

⁸⁰ Edmund Husserl, Briefwechsel Bd. 2, *Die Münchener Phänomenologie*, ed. cit., p. 239.

⁸¹ Schwarz contributed to both the *Jahrbuch* (Schwarz 1929) and the Pfänder-Festschrift (Schwarz 1933). In the Nachlass of Theodor Conrad, we find three unpublished manuscripts by Schwarz: *Wertschätzung und Wert* [Ana. 378. D. Festschrift Theodor Conrad zum 75. Geburtstag], *Der Wert und seine Voraussetzungen*, and *Die Richtigkeit einer Behauptung*, both in [Ana. 378. B.II. An Conrad von Philipp Schwarz].

⁸² Gershom Scholem, *Briefe*, Band I: 1914-1947, Munich, Beck, 1994, p. 113.

⁸³ Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of my Youth*, Philadelphia, Paul Dry

dissertation on the foundations of mathematics under his supervision, even though Scholem did not quite agree with Linke's phenomenological orientation. Despite his fondness for Linke and his initial sympathy for phenomenology, Scholem had serious reservations: "I strongly doubted the refutation of the theory of relativity on the basis of 'reine Wesensschau' [intuition of essences], a refutation which was prevalent among the phenomenologists then and even years later. They held that Einstein's ideas were only fictions in Vaihinger's sense—that is, 'demonstrably' false even though 'fruitful.' For this I had no use whatever, and such intuition of essence was suspect to me."⁸⁴

In WS 1919/20, Scholem arrived in Munich with the intention to studying philology and philosophy.⁸⁵ His original plan was to write a dissertation on the linguistic philosophy of the Kabbala under the supervision of Clemens Baeumker. However, he ended up switching majors from philosophy to Semitics and instead produced a critical translation with commentary of Sefer Ha-Bahir, which he defended in 1922. His reasons for abandoning philosophy were his dislike of two of his professors, Alexander Pfänder and Erich Becher, and his dislike of psychology (which was the only minor allowed for a philosophy major at the time). As Scholem recounts:

My general dislike for [psychology] was only increased by my study of phenomenological analyses of psychological problems which were then very fashionable. In those days I came to reject the phenomenology of Husserl, though I had been greatly in sympathy with it for a few years, having been impressed by the very subtle *Logische Untersuchungen*. But the lectures of Husserl's disciple Alexander Pfänder completely alienated me from this mode of thinking. In a public lecture—I myself was present—Pfänder performed the feat of making the existence of God (which I have never doubted) 'visible' by phenomenological means. This was too much for me. His seminar also helped to drive me out of this circle. Once a dead serious discussion extended over several hours in the presence of some very penetrating minds (I still remember Maximilian Beck), concerning the question whether a fried fish was a fish or not.⁸⁶

Despite his overall distaste for phenomenology, and his complaints concerning what he perceived to be a revival of Hegelianism in Husserl's *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, Scholem called Husserl "the most powerful mind the Jewish people had at the time."⁸⁷

In the next part of her 1920 letter to Husserl, Walther tries to clear up her somewhat inaccurate description of the individual person, that is, of the source-point of lived-experience—the concrete ego—as the bearer of the qualities of the subject [*Quellpunkte der Erlebnisse als Sitz der Qualität*

Books, 2012, p. 97. Trans. Harry Zohn.

⁸⁴ *Idem*.

⁸⁵ Gershom Scholem, *Briefe, Band I: 1914-1947*, ed. cit., p. 207.

⁸⁶ Gershom Scholem, *From Berlin to Jerusalem: Memories of my Youth*, ed. cit., pp. 118-119.

⁸⁷ As quoted in Nicolas Monseu, *Les Usages de L'intentionnalité: Recherches Sur Le Première Réception de Husserl en France*, Leuven, Peeters, 2005, pp. 82-83.

des Subjekts].⁸⁸ Husserl's response to Walther, written sometime later that month, takes up this idea explicitly. This discussion appears to be a continuation of the debate that arose out of Walther's paper "Zur Problematik von Husserls reinem Ich." Husserl's remarks here are elaborated on in the opening sections of the Fourth Meditation, and are taken up by Walther in her discussion of the essence of the person in *Phänomenologie der Mystik*.

APPENDIX. GERDA WALTHER'S COURSE ENROLLMENT LISTS⁸⁹

WS 1915/16 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Russisch für Anfänger – Erich Berneker
 Allgemeines Staatsrecht mit allgemeines Soziallehre des Staates und Politik – Anton Dyroff
 Volkswirtschaftliche Übungen (Proseminar) – Edgar Jaffé
 Logik – Oswald Külpe⁹⁰
 Allgemeine oder theoretische Volkswirtschaftslehre – Walther Lotz
 Allgemeine Geschichte in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts (1815[1806] - 1850) – Erich Marcks

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SS 1916 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Fichte, Schelling, Hegel – Ernst von Aster
 Einführungskurs in die experimentelle Psychologie – Karl Bühler
 Volkswirtschaftliches Seminar – Edgar Jaffé
 Wirtschaftsgeographie – Rudolf Leonhard
 Geld- und Währungsfrage, Bankwesen, Börsenwesen, Handels - und

⁸⁸ The issue of the Ich als Quellpunkt arises in Husserl's manuscripts for the 1925 lectures on *Phänomenologische Psychologie*. In manuscript A VI 12 II/73a (unpublished), when describing the levels of intentionality of emotive life, Husserl writes, "Die Intentionalität des Gemütszustandes, der festen Entschlossenheit als Habitus, in dem in ich durch das leben gehe, und während ich dies und jenes denke, fühle, tue, immer im Hintergrund mein Ziel habe, meinen festen Zusammenschluss." This description of habitus, dating to 1911, is almost the same description we find in Husserl's letters to Walther. Husserl began to further develop the notion of "habitual intentionality" in his manuscripts from 1917 to 1921. For example, in Ms. A VI 30, November, 1921, Husserl writes: "Habe I. Personale Hexis (Habitualitäten des Ich) und personales Wirken. Schwieriges Problem wie man <gestr.: sich> von einer Eigenheit seines Ich, von einer Hexis Erkenntnis gewinnt. Ichwirken und Affektion und Habe - Wirken des Ich - Willensanalysen Intersubjektives Wirken von Ich auf Ich. Gegenstände habituelle Besitztümer aus Erzeugung, Selbstgebung als Selbsterzielung. Auch zur Willensanalyse - Trieb, ichliches Streben, Werten, Begehren, Reiz, Affektion."

⁸⁹ Below is a list of all courses in which Walther was enrolled from WS 1915/16 to WS 1922/23 in Munich, Freiburg, and Heidelberg. These lists are based on her official documents obtained from the university archives of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, and Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, and have been cross-referenced with the course calendars from the respective universities. I wish to thank Johanna Brüssermann, Simone Aurora, and Florian Feige for assisting me in obtaining these materials.

⁹⁰ Külpe died midway through the semester (30 December 1915), and the remainder of the course was taught by Bühler (Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 184.)

Verkehrspolitik – Walther Lotz
Logik und Erkenntnislehre – Alexander Pfänder
Übungen im Philosophischen Seminar über D. Hume's
Erkenntnislehre – Alexander Pfänder

WS 1916/17 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Wirtschaftsgeschichte – Lujo Brentano
Sprachpsychologie – Karl Bühler
Kriegswirtschaftslehre – Georg von Mayr
Sachliche und historische Einleitung in die Philosophie – Alexander Pfänder
Volkswirtschaftliche Literaturgeschichte – Ludwig Sinzheimer
Übungen aus dem Gebiete der allgemeinen Volkswirtschaftslehre – Ludwig
Sinzheimer
Statistik (insbesondere Wirtschaftsstatistik) und der Krieg – Friedrich Zahn

SS 1917 (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Einleitung in die Phänomenologie – Edmund Husserl
Kants Transzendentalphilosophie – Edmund Husserl
Die Philosophie des Aristoteles – Joseph Geysler
Dante und seine Zeit – Heinrich Finke
Vlandern – Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz

WS 1917/18 (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Logik – Edmund Husserl
Weltanschauungen des deutschen Idealismus – Jonas Cohn
Analytische Geometrie des Raumes – Lothar Heffter

SS 1918 (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Einleitung in die Philosophie – Edmund Husserl
Uebungen über J. G. Fichtes Bestimmung des Menschen – Edmund Husserl
Hegels Philosophie – Jonas Cohn
Philosophische Besprechungen (Hegel) – Jonas Cohn
Geschichte der antiken griechischen Philosophie – Joseph Geysler
Algebraische Analysis – Lothar Heffter

WS 1918/19 (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Geschichte der Philosophie von den ersten Anfängen bis zu Beginn des 19.
Jahrhundert – Edmund Husserl
Mengenlehre – Alfred Loewy
Übungen über Kants Transzendentalphilosophie – Edmund Husserl

Philosophische Besprechungen (Logik) – Jonas Cohn

KNS 1919 (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem – Martin Heidegger.⁹¹

SS 1919 (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Natur und Geist – Edmund Husserl
Grundprobleme der Ethik in philosophischen Übungen (Kants Metaphysik der Sitten) – Edmund Husserl
Deutsches Reichs- und Landes-Staatsrecht – Heinrich Rosin
Phänomenologie und transzendental Wertphilosophie – Martin Heidegger
Ueber das Wesen der Universität und des akademischen Studiums – Martin Heidegger.

WS 1919/20 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

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Übungen zur Geschichtsphilosophie – Moritz Geiger
Einleitung in die Philosophie – Alexander Pfänder
Übungen zur Einleitung in die Philosophie – im Anschluss an die Vorlesung (im Philosophischen Seminar) – Alexander Pfänder
Abriss der universalen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte – Max Weber
Soziologische Arbeiten und Besprechungen – Max Weber

SS 1920 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Psychologie – Clemens Baeumker
Ethische Fragen – Clemens Baeumker
Ethische Übungen im philosophischen Seminar – Clemens Baeumker
Übungen zur Geschichtsphilosophie (im philosophischen Seminar) – Moritz Geiger
Übungen zur im Anschluss an die Vorlesung (im philosophischen Seminar) – Alexander Pfänder
Allgemeine Staatslehre und Politik (Staatssoziologie) – Max Weber
Sozialismus (Einführungsvorlesungen) – Max Weber
Grundlagen der Soziologie – Aloys Fischer⁹²

⁹¹ Though her official university documents do not indicate that Walther was enrolled in any courses during this semester, and although this course is not listed in the Ankündigung der Vorlesungen der Badischen Albert Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg im Breisgau für das Kriegsnostsemester für Kriegsteilnehmer (25. Januar bis 16. April 1919), in her Nachlass we find notes for Heidegger's *Idee einer Philosophie und Weltanschauungsprobleme* KNS 1919 [Ana 317 B.V.3.a].

⁹² I can find no record of this course in the LMU Verzeichnis der Vorlesungen Sommer-halbjahr 1920, but it is listed on her official enrollment sheets and Walther mentions studying sociology with Fischer in her autobiography (Cf. Gerda Walther, *Zum anderen Ufer: Vom Marxismus und Atheismus zum Christentum*, ed. cit., p. 275).

WS 1920/21 (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie - Clemens Baeumker
Deutsches Staatsrecht – Anton Dyroff
Grundzüge der Psychologie des Menschen – Alexander Pfänder
Übungen im Philosophischen Seminar über "Lebewesen und Person" –
Alexander Pfänder

WS 1922/23 (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)⁹³

Übungen zur Methodenlehre der Geschichte und Biologie mit besonderer
Rücksicht auf die Abhandlungen zur Wissenschaftslehre von Max Weber –
Heinrich Rickert
Übungen über Hegels Logik – Karl Jaspers
Deutsche Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert – Friedrich Gundelfinger
Psychologie des Abnormen und ihre Bedeutung für die Kulturwissenschaften –
Hans Gruhle

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SS 1923 (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg)

Übungen über den Begriff der Intuition – Heinrich Rickert
Philosophie der Kunst – Heinrich Rickert
Empirische Psychologie – Karl Jaspers
Goethe – Friedrich Gundelfinger
Propädeutisch-psychiatrische Klinik (und medizinischer Psychologie) – Hans
Gruhle

⁹³ Unfortunately, there are no official records of the courses that Walther attended during her semesters in Heidelberg. However, in her autobiography, Walther indicates that she took a seminar with Jaspers on Hegel, lectures of Hans Gruhle on schizophrenia, Rickert's seminar —where Walther presented on "Intuition in Husserl's *Wesensschau*"— and lectures on Goethe delivered by Friedrich Gundelfinger (Gundolf) (*Ibid.*, pp. 227-241). The courses listed here are the ones from the Heidelberg course calendars that seem to best fit the descriptions provided by Walther. They should be taken with a grain of salt.

