

“We-Subjectivity”: Husserl on Community and Communal Constitution

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I. Introduction

In *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl famously offers an account of how an individual subject can experience others as being centers of consciousness radically independent of its own and, subsequently, how the individual subject then constitutes the experienced world as objectively there for everyone. But Husserl’s account of intersubjectivity includes many further dimensions. A sense of others is a necessary component of almost *all* of our experiences. Even my experience of *myself*, whether as a psychophysical natural organism or as a full-fledged person functioning in society, depends on my having a sense of others and on my entering into actual relationships with them. Furthermore, I experience the world as including, not just other individuals like me, but *communities* of individuals and I experience myself as a member of various of these communities. As a member of a community, I conceive of myself and others as having a mutual or communal “take” on the world and on ourselves. Communities function, not merely as multiple subjects with similar experiences and common interests, but as a “we” that – together – has a common experience and understanding of how things are or ought to be. Even the natural world is intersubjective, not merely because it is experienced by a plurality of individual subjects whose experiences happen to have a common object, but because the experience that constitutes it is itself intersubjective or communal. The subjectivity that constitutes the world is, Husserl says, “we-subjectivity”.¹ In this essay, I shall explore some of these communal dimensions of intersubjectivity.

II. Some Methodological and Terminological Preliminaries

It’s not too difficult, and I think not too much of a stretch, to see a certain similarity between Husserlian phenomenology and so-called “analytic” philosophy: both focus on the analysis of meanings or concepts. The difference (if I may indulge a huge oversimplification) is that phenomenology is primarily concerned, not with linguistic analysis, but with the analysis of meanings as they play a role in *experience*. And this concern

¹ Husserl (1970a), §28, p. 109. Subsequent references to *Crisis* are to this work.

gives phenomenology a particular kind of entre into the analysis of meaning by considering and comparing various experiences. I see that figure in the store window as a mannequin, but then a moment later I take it to be a real person. What's the difference? This question is a *phenomenological* question because it is about *how I see* the figure, not about what the figure *is*. And it is thereby also a question about meanings (senses) or concepts. *How* I see the figure is largely a matter of what concept or sense I have of it as it appears to me: my first sense of the figure – the concept under which I subsumed it – was “mannequin”; then, a moment later, my sense of the figure changed and I saw it as a person. This difference in sense may be investigated *phenomenologically* by comparing the two experiences. When I do so, I discover certain elements of sense that are common to the two experiences and some that are different. E.g., in both cases I see the figure as a three-dimensional object of a certain human-like shape; but only in the latter do I see it as alive and apt to turn around and walk away. The sense “person” includes the sense “capable of self movement”.

The Husserlian term ‘constitution’ will be used frequently in this essay. To “constitute” an object, in this usage of the term, roughly means to experience it “as” a particular object of a certain sort. Thus, referring to the example above, we’ll say that I first “constituted” the figure as a mannequin and then a moment later “constituted” it as a person. Importantly, the same object can be constituted differently even by the same subject: I constitute my department Chair as a good administrator when she convinces the Dean to increase the travel budget; I constitute her as a friend when she offers to teach my class so that I can attend a philosophical workshop. The constitution of an object – what the object is experienced “as” – depends on the subject’s sense or conception of what the object is (and, as the examples we’ve given illustrate, these senses may or may not be compatible with each other). Thus, I shall frequently interchange questions about the “constitution” of such-and-such with questions about the experiencing subject’s “sense” of such-and-such.

I’ve just given an intuitive characterization of some central and far more complex Husserlian phenomenological concepts, and it would be nice if things could be left there. We will have to be somewhat more precise, though, and I think we can without becoming overly technical. For one thing, of course, there is no *one* sense or concept that can capture how I experience any complex object, so we need to be clearer about the sense or meaning of an experience. According to Husserl, every experience includes an organized *complex* of senses that determines the intentionality of the experience. This organized meaning-complex, which Husserl calls the “noema” of the experience, gives structure to the experience, making it as if it is of or about a particular object with particular properties and relations to other objects. It is the noema, then, that determines the constitution of the object for the subject: in having an experience with a particular noema, a subject takes herself to be experiencing a certain object with such-and-such characteristics. As we will discuss later, the noema also predelineates for the subject an open-ended pattern of expectations concerning further possible ways of experiencing the same object: these

expectations will change with changes in the noema, with changes in how she constitutes the object (e.g., as mannequin or person). These further possible ways of experiencing the object, compatible with the current experience, make up a significant part of what Husserl calls the “horizon” of the experience. The full constitution of the object is determined not only by the noema of the current experience but the noemata of these and other horizontal experiences as well. (We will later see that, and how, the noemata of other persons’ experiences also contribute to *my* constitution of the object.) Importantly, the constitution of an object does not *create* such an object: the noema of the experience tells us only what the subject *takes* herself to be experiencing and what characteristics she *takes* it as having. (That’s why we said above that the noema makes the experience “as if” it is of or about an object.) For this reason, Husserl’s phenomenological reduction begins with an *epoché* of the object of an experience – a suspension of judgment concerning its existence and actual characteristics – in order to investigate the noemata through which it is constituted.²

III. The “Solitary Subject”: A Thought-Experiment

Prominently in *Cartesian Meditations*, but in other works as well, Husserl appeals to a thought-experiment that, among other things, reveals the pervasiveness throughout experience of our concept of others. He invites us to imagine what our experience would be like if we had no sense of others as conscious beings like ourselves and to compare that experience with experience as we actually have it. Husserl calls the thought-experiment a “reduction” to the subject’s “sphere of ownness”.³

The phenomenological reduction requires that I abstain from positing the *existence* of the objects I experience, including other persons; with this further reduction, I am to suppose that I do not even possess the *concept* of others. Importantly, the thought-experiment not only eliminates the sense “other person” from every noema; it also eliminates all components of sense that depend in any way on that sense. Clearly, then, if I were such a solitary subject within my own sphere of ownness, I could not constitute objects as having social or cultural properties or functions: I could not experience things as being books, memorials, or subway tokens. Perhaps more strikingly, as a solitary subject I could have no sense of my *own* personhood. I could not conceive of myself as funny or dull, handsome or ugly, rich or poor, or in terms of social roles such as teacher, husband, or friend – the very sort of properties and roles that normally define who we are as persons, Husserl says. Furthermore, having no sense that the things I experience are perceivable by others, I could not constitute perceptible things as belonging to a world of nature independent of myself. Accordingly, as a solitary subject, I could not even experience my own embodied self as a *natural human being*.

² For fuller discussions of these notions as I understand them, see Føllesdal (1988) and Smith and McIntyre (1982), Chapters III-V.

³ Husserl (1970b), §§44ff. Subsequent references to *CM* are to this work.

Clearly, then, if I were a solitary subject, stripped of all sense of others and so reduced to my sphere of ownness, I could have at best an extremely impoverished or watered-down sense of myself and of the other things I experience. But I would experience my own body as a special one of these watered-down things, Husserl says.⁴ Touching other bodies produces sensations felt in my *own* body, giving me a sense of my body as the locus of sensation-fields and a sense of myself as located where my body is. As a solitary subject I would also be aware of having desires, feelings, emotions, etc., although, Husserl says, I would not always experience them as integrated with my body in the way my sensations are. Importantly, I would also be aware of my ability to initiate actions and of my body as the only object that I can spontaneously move by will. My body would appear to me, in all these respects, as *unique* among all the things I experience: not simply as one body (*Körper*) among others but as the *only* living, animated, body (*Leib*). And I would identify myself as *being* this animated body.⁵

My experience of my body as something that I can freely move about in space would be of particular significance. If I were to keep my fix on an object as my location and my experience changed, I could gain the conception of objects as experienceable from multiple perspectives: the sense that the object I am now experiencing in this way from here is the *same* one that I earlier experienced in a different way from there. My experience would have what Husserl calls an experience-“horizon”. This means that I would experience things as “transcending” what appears from any one perspective: as having not just those characteristics that I am perceiving now but as also having other characteristics that other experiences would reveal if I occupied the appropriate positions. Thus, Husserl says, “... this peculiar abstractive sense-exclusion of what is alien leaves us a *kind of ‘world’* still, a Nature reduced to what is included in our ownness.” But, he immediately adds, “none of this is worldly in the natural sense (therefore ... the quotation marks)” (*CM*, §44, p. 98).

Importantly, the notion of “transcendence” available to the solitary subject is not the transcendence required for constituting physical objects in the world of nature: that requires a sense of an object as having not just the temporal sequences of profiles available to oneself but as possessing multiple profiles simultaneously perceivable from perspectives other than one’s own.

As soon as we exclude from consideration the intentional effects produced by “empathy”, by our experience of others, we have a Nature (including an animate organism) that is constituted, to be sure, as a unity of spatial objects “transcending” the stream of subjective processes, yet constituted as merely a multiplicity of objects of possible experience – this experience being purely *my own* life.... (*CM*, §47, p. 104.)⁶

⁴ Husserl goes into considerable detail about how this is so in Husserl (1989), §§35-42. Subsequent references to *Ideas II* are to this work.

⁵ See *CM*, §44, p. 97.

⁶ There seems to be some tension here between my account and that of John Drummond (2012, this volume), pp. 117-123. Drummond argues that the solipsistic subject, prior to constituting any actual others,

Given this, the solitary subject could not even have the sense of *itself* as an animated *physical thing*, much less a socially characterized “person”. “... I have lost my natural sense as Ego [*Ich*], since every sense-relation to a possible Us or We remains excluded, and have lost likewise all my worldliness, in the natural sense,” Husserl says (*CM*, §44, p. 98).⁷

Furthermore, as I read Husserl’s thought-experiment, the solitary subject’s sense of self is a sense that applies *only* to itself. What is missing for the solitary subject is a sense of itself, not as a unique *entity*, but as an entity of a special *kind* that includes actual or possible others – a general concept of embodied selfhood.⁸

The task now is to discover the additional experiential resources that come into play in our ordinary full-bodied constitution of ourselves, others, and the world of nature.

It must now be made understandable *how*, at the founded higher level, the sense-bestowal pertaining to transcendency proper, to ... *Objective transcendency*, comes about – and does so as an experience. Here it is not a matter of uncovering a genesis going on in time, but a matter of “*static analysis*”. The Objective world is constantly there before me as already finished, a datum of my livingly continuous Objective experience and, even in respect of what is no longer experienced, something I go on accepting habitually. It is a matter of examining this experience itself and uncovering intentionally the manner in which it bestows sense, the manner in which it can occur as experience and become verified as evidence relating to an actual existent with an explicable essence of *its* own, which is not *my* own essence and has no place as a constituent part thereof, though it nevertheless can acquire sense and verification only in *my* essence. (*CM*, §48, p. 106.)

As Husserl says here, the account he gives is not genetic: it does not propose to explain how higher or more complicated forms of constitution develop out of earlier less complicated forms. Rather, we are trying to understand the various layers of sense that are

must possess a sense of “open-intersubjectivity”: a sense that objects are experienceable by indefinite possible others. I, on the other hand, have presented the solipsistic subject as having no sense of intersubjectivity at all. Drummond’s argument is that, without at least a sense of open-intersubjectivity, the solipsistic subject cannot constitute anything as transcendent: “Husserl ... characterizes all experiences, to the extent that they are experiences of transcendent objects, as intersubjective,” he says (p. 122). The puzzling thing here is that Drummond and I are in complete agreement about the relation of transcendence to intersubjectivity. So, where do we differ? I read Husserl’s reduction to the “sphere of ownness” as a reduction to *complete* subjectivity and I understand the “transcendence” of objects in that sphere as falling far short of intersubjective transcendence. My argument has been that such a solipsistic subject would not have *any* sense of others and so could *not* experience objects as transcendent of its own actual and possible experiences. Drummond’s seems to be that a solipsistic subject *would* experience objects as so transcendent and so *must* possess at least a sense of open-intersubjectivity. (We seem to have provided a classic case of “one person’s *ponens* is another’s *tollens*.”) I believe my account fits better with the words from Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* that I have quoted, but little in the rest of my essay (or Drummond’s) turns on this issue. Drummond’s position accords with Dan Zahavi’s treatment of intersubjectivity in Zahavi (2001), pp. 50-59.

⁷ Cf. *Ideas* II, §42, p. 169.

⁸ Peter Strawson has argued that one cannot have a concept of oneself unless one can also ascribe that concept to others. See his Strawson (1959), pp. 94-100. I believe my account of the solitary subject’s sense of self is compatible with Strawson, but to show that I would have to say more than I have here. Interestingly, Strawson’s further account of how we experience persons is remarkably similar to Husserl’s, which we’ll discuss in section IV below.

involved in our constitution of the natural world and of ourselves and others as natural organisms and as social creatures. The solitary subject is a fiction of the thought-experiment. The question is: What do we have that this fictional solipsistic subject does not – what elements of sense and what further kinds of experience that “bestow” this sense? Having found the logically lowest level, Husserl tries to add the others in order of their logical priority.

IV. Constitution of the “Other” and Enrichment of My Sense of Self

What first comes into play in the constitution of others like myself is a type of experience that Husserl calls “analogical apperception” (or, more generally, “analogical appresentation”). This is a mode of experience that Husserl sees as pervasive in everyday life, and so I’ll discuss it briefly without worrying about the thought-experiment. In the most common case of apperception, I see something whose like I have seen before. Because I see the present object as similar to these others, I am involuntarily prompted or “motivated” to apply to it the same sense or concept that I applied to them. Presented with the “heads” side of a penny, for example, and seeing its similarity to the “heads” side of other pennies I’ve seen, I involuntarily and without further thought (“passively,” Husserl says) ascribe the sense “penny” to this object and so see it as a penny, too. I thereby see this object as having not only a “heads” side but a “tails” side as well. In Husserl’s terminology, the “heads” side is *perceived*, or *presented*; the “tails” side is *apperceived*, or *appresented*; and I experience the object as including both. All ordinary perception involves apperception, for it is by its means that we experience things as having more to them than meets the eye.

Husserl sees the same associative principle at work when one conscious subject experiences another. So, let’s return for a moment to the thought-experiment and imagine the fictional solitary subject’s first encounter with another, again supposing that I am that subject. I experience this first other as being like me in its perceivable bodily characteristics and I see it moving itself, behaving, in ways that resemble the movements of no other body but my own. Perceptually presented with a body like mine that behaves as I do in similar circumstances, I attribute to that body the sense that I have of myself. Thus, by appresentation, I experience it as not simply another body but as an animated body (*Leib*) like me. Just as I apperceptively experience the hidden side of the penny when one of its sides is presented, so I apperceptively experience the animating life of the other when her physical body and behavior are presented.

But let’s take care to avoid a misunderstanding here. It’s not that I *first* experience the other’s physical body and its behavior and subsequently *infer* the existence of an inner life. Rather, there’s just one intentional act: the act of constituting the body that I’m encountering as an animated organism and, in virtue of that, as expressing in its behavior a subjective psychological life. Edith Stein, Husserl’s doctoral student and assistant when he was writing the manuscripts that became *Ideas II*, calls this form of experiencing another the “essence of acts of empathy,” which she characterizes as “the

experience of foreign consciousness in general”.⁹ Accordingly, I’ll call it “*empathic apperception*”.

With empathic apperception, involuntarily and without further thought, I see the other’s body as another “me,” i.e., not merely as a body but as a body animated by sensations and feelings and productive of its own movement, as am I. Of course, experiencing the other as another “me” cannot mean that I now experience two instances of *myself*! For one thing, I cannot directly experience the sensations and feelings of the other as I experience my own; I can only empathically *apperceive* them as present in the other. As Husserl emphasizes, it is this that makes the other truly “other” to me and, in recognition of it, I *constitute* the other as radically “other” – as another subject, whose experiences are distinct from my own.

Furthermore, to return to an earlier point, the solitary subject’s sense of self seems to apply *only* to itself. As a solitary subject I will not have a general sense of my animated body as an entity of a certain *kind*. But with my experience of the other, I see that there is another “I” (or, better, an “other I”). *Now* I experience myself as an instance of a kind, and as I interact with more and more new-found others I learn more and more about just what that kind is. My individualistic sense of myself is thereby replaced with a general concept that enables me to reflect on myself as a being of the same kind as others. Through empathic experience, accordingly, I gain much more than a sense of others and what *they* are like; I also enrich my sense of what I *myself* am like. “It is only with empathy and ... empirical reflection onto the psychic life which is appresented along with the other’s Body and which is continually taken ... together with the Body, that the closed unity, man, is constituted, *and I transfer this unity subsequently to myself*” (*Ideas* II, §46, p. 175, my emphasis).

But, of course, I do not see myself and others as mere duplicates or clones of one another. While we share many similarities, I also recognize many differences – including, most significantly, that there is a psychological life that belongs exclusively to *me*, the only one that is directly intuitable by me and by me alone, and that the apperceptively experienced inner lives of others similarly belong to them alone. Thus, my sense of the “mineness” of my self is yet another byproduct of my sense of others. The other is experienced as a “‘modification’ of myself,” Husserl says, “which, for its part, gets this character of being ‘my’ self by virtue of the contrastive pairing that necessarily takes place” (*CM*, §52, p. 115). (The notion of “pairing” will be discussed shortly.)

My sense of others also gives me a sense of things as genuinely transcending what I can experience of them. I experience the other “as having spatial modes of appearance like those I should have if I should go over there and be where he is” (*CM*, §53, p. 117). Thus, I experience the things in my purview, including my body and the other’s, as having not only the profile that appears to me from my current perspective but also, *simultaneously*, a profile that presents itself to him from his perspective but not to me from mine. “... The *Other’s animate bodily organism* ... is, so to speak, *the intrinsically first Object*,”

⁹ Stein (1989), p. 11.

Husserl says, “just as *the other man is constitutionally the intrinsically first Objective man*” (*CM*, §55, p. 124). I now constitute the things that I experience as belonging to the same world that others experience, each of us from her or his own unique perspective. And I experience myself and others as co-constitutors of that intersubjective world of objects.

V. *The Person as a Socialized, “Spiritual”, Being*

We have now seen how very little of our ordinary experience can be accounted for on the basis of individualistic, or solipsistic, concepts alone. But with a sense of others, we can experience ourselves and others as psycho-physical natural organisms existing within an objective world of intersubjectively experienceable physical things, and each of us can have a sense of itself as distinctively its *own* self. Nonetheless, Husserl emphasizes, there is more to being a *person* than this.

Husserl distinguishes persons as “natural” organisms from persons in the full-bodied sense of “spiritual” social beings: the person or “the Ego [*Ich*] ... as *member of a social world*” (*Ideas II*, §49, p. 184). The world is not just the world of nature, Husserl says, but is also a social world, a world in which a person

... pursues natural science, psychology, history, etc., or again, works as a man active in the practical life, utilizes the things of *his environment [Umwelt]*, transforming them according to his purposes, and evaluates them from aesthetic, ethical, and utilitarian points of view.... Here ... he places himself in communicative relation toward his fellow men, speaks with them, writes them, reads about them in the papers, associates with them in communal activities, makes promises to them, etc.... This surrounding world [*Umwelt*] is comprised not of mere things but of use-Objects (clothes, utensils, guns, tools), works of art, literary products, instruments for religious and judicial activities (seals, official ornaments, coronation insignia, ecclesiastical symbols, etc.). And it is comprised not only of individual persons, but the persons are instead members of communities, members of personal unities of a higher order, which, as totalities, have their own lives, preserve themselves by lasting through time despite the joining or leaving of individuals, have their qualities as communities, their moral and judicial regulations, their modes of functioning in collaboration with other communities and with individual persons.... The members of the community, of marriage and of the family, of the social class, of the union, of the borough, of the state, of the church, etc., “know” themselves as their members, consciously realize that they are dependent on them, and perhaps consciously react back on them. (*Ideas II*, §49(e), pp. 191-92.)

“To live as a person,” Husserl says, “is to posit oneself as a person, to find oneself in, and to bring oneself into, conscious relations with a ‘surrounding world’” (*Ideas II*, §49(e), p. 193).

So, *persons* are known, and know themselves, in terms of their relationships with others within the social world.¹⁰ As Adam Smith eloquently writes:

Were it possible that some human creature could grow to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, or the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind,

¹⁰ For a fuller discussion, see Beyer (2012, this volume), pp. 93-116.

than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. All these are objects which he cannot easily see, which naturally he does not look at.... Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with a mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with.... (Adam Smith (1976), III.i.3.3, p.110)

Among the many aspects of the social world that invite and merit extensive discussion, my focus will be on its comprising, not only individual persons, but “personal unities of a higher order” – communities. The main question here is: What is a “community”? My answer, stated most generally, will be that a community is an association of persons who together, communally, constitute a domain of common interests and concerns (what Husserl calls their “surrounding world”, their “*Umwelt*”). But this answer just provokes another: How can a community, as opposed to its individual members, constitute anything? I shall try to answer these questions in a way that will apply to more and less encompassing communities: to cliques, clubs, teams, neighborhoods, states, nations, and in a certain way to humanity itself. Since a society can comprise many different communities, and individuals can belong to the same society without belonging to the same communities, I’ll not equate communities with societies.¹¹ (Consider also: the American Philosophical Association is an organized society that anyone can join by paying the dues; the *community* of American philosophers – supposing there is one – is something else entirely.)

However, I shall not jump immediately into these matters of higher-level constitution. I will return instead to where we left off in Husserl’s thought-experiment. There we will find some additional phenomenological resources that we can apply to these more complicated matters.

VI. *Foundations of Community: Empathic Pairing*

In developing his thought-experiment in *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl describes an encounter of one subject with another not only as an instance of appresentation but also as a case of “pairing”. I believe this feature of experience is more important than is usually acknowledged, and I shall perhaps make more of it than Husserl himself intended. In Husserl’s thought experiment it makes itself evident even at the level of the imagined solitary subject’s original contact with another, but I see it as then playing a foundational role both in the constitution of community and in communal constitution.

So, let’s consider *pairing*, which Husserl characterizes as another type of experience by association. I see two similar things as alike and forming a pair, e.g., a pair of gloves. They’re not identical but they’re similar in appearance and bear an interesting left-right reciprocal relationship to each other. I typically experience them, not as simply this glove and that glove, but as a pair of gloves. Indeed, when I experience just one glove in the absence of the other, I often still experience it as one “of a pair”.

¹¹ See Drummond (1966), p. 238.

Experiencing two things as a pair is not the same as merely seeing them as things of the same kind. (I can see any number of items as gloves without seeing any two of them as a pair.) The members of a pair are experienced as “belonging” together. The difference is important and difficult to articulate but fortunately easy to illustrate. Seeing two people walking down the street or sitting on a park bench is quite different from seeing a “couple” there. Seeing one love bird fly past and then another love bird fly past, or even seeing two love birds fly past together, is not the same as seeing a “pair” of love birds.

In experiencing two objects as a “pair”, the two are given simultaneously in one experience, “given to consciousness in the unity of ... *one* intuition,” Husserl says.¹² The members of the pair retain their identity as individuals, and are so constituted, but because of their similarities and their apparent relations to each other, there is an “over-laying” of each object with the sense of the other, Husserl says. The result is a new enriched sense applying to the two together and constituting them as a pair.¹³ In *Experience and Judgment* he writes: “The two features [or the two objects] are blended in a *community* [*Gemeinsamkeit*]; yet there also remains a duality of material separation, which is the separation and coincidence of what is ‘*akin*’ [*Verwandtem*]. They do not go together to form a ‘like’ [*Gleichen*] but to form a pair [*Paar*], where the one is certainly ‘like’ the other but ‘stands off’ from it.” (*EJ*, §44, p. 191, my emphasis.)

In pairing, we experience the *kinship* of one thing with another. And pairing is but the minimal case of the constitution of kinship relations among groups or collections or (as intimated in the just-quoted passage) communities; for lack of a better term, I’ll call the generalized notion “grouping”. Because of their obvious similarities, reinforced by the way they join together at their stems, I “group” the bananas in the bowl and constitute them as forming a “bunch”. There are some crows in my neighborhood. They don’t associate with any other birds, and you almost never see one of them by itself; they always fly in together and all occupy the same tree where they screech at each other until they suddenly all fly out together. I constitute them as belonging to a “family” or a “flock”.¹⁴

¹² Husserl (1973a), §43(a), p. 182. Subsequent references to *EJ* will be to this work.

¹³ See *CM*, §51.

¹⁴ The pairing, or grouping, being described here – a type of passive synthesis by association – is not to be confused with what Husserl calls the “active” synthesis of collecting. In *CM*, §38, Husserl characterizes collecting as a form of *active* synthesis in which a *new object* – a collection – is constituted, as the number is constituted in counting. But that’s not what I mean by “pairing” or “grouping”, in which a pair or group is constituted. In collecting, counting, etc. the items involved need have nothing significant in common. What I mean is a passive synthesis wherein two or more items are experienced as *associated* on the basis of their experienced similarities. Importantly, what results is not our experience of the pair as a *new object* (or not just that); rather we experience *each* of the paired objects as “paired” with the other. I slide from the “pairing” of two objects in this sense to the constitution of a “pair” in exactly the way Husserl seems to when he says in *CM*, §51: “In a pairing association ... two data are given intuitionally, and with prominence, in the unity of a consciousness and ... as data appearing with mutual distinctness, they found phenomenologically a unity of similarity and thus are always constituted precisely as a pair” (p. 11).

The uniquely important feature of pairing (and grouping) as applied to my experience of another is this: in a pairing encounter with another person I constitute two objects as forming a pair, where the constituted pair includes *myself* as a member. By empathic apperception I experience another as an image of myself – my “alter ego,” Husserl says (e.g., *CM*, §44, p. 94; §50, p. 110). And I argued above that, with empathic apperception, the solitary subject in the thought-experiment constitutes itself and the other as instances of the same *kind*, thus ending its solitude and enriching its sense of itself. Husserl is now making a further, and I think a stronger, claim: “*Ego and alter ego are always and necessarily given in an original ‘pairing’*” (*CM*, §51, p. 112).

Husserl gives a reason for his saying “always and necessarily”. While in every other case of pairing, it is possible for me to experience either member of the pair in the absence of the other, that is not the case with my experience of another. That’s because I am always present in any such experience, and the perceived similarities between the other and myself are at the heart of the experience. But Husserl’s “always and necessarily” needs some modification. Because you and I are both human beings, we will have enough features in common to *motivate* a possible pairing on some of those features. But this motivation can be stronger or weaker, depending on circumstances and on which features of myself and the other are prominent and of interest. If I see you as engaging in an act of cruelty, I’ll withhold constituting us as a pair, our other similarities notwithstanding: I’ll constitute *you* – not *us* – as cruel. Even in ordinary cases of pairing I’m free to experience each member of the pair as an individual on its own, whether both are present or not, and I often do. (Parents of twins are well aware of this difference.)

Nonetheless, Husserl’s point is important. If he’s right, every encounter with another motivates a pairing with that other even if the motivation is not necessarily acted upon. My spontaneous impulse – which may be overridden – is to constitute you and me as not merely individuals of the same kind, but as “us” or “we”. Let’s call this form of pairing, wherein I constitute myself as one of the pair, *empathic* pairing. And when I constitute larger groups that include myself, let’s call it an *empathic* grouping. Thus, I may constitute you as talking to me (two individuals), or you and others as a group of people who are conversing (with each other but not with me). But in *empathic* experience, I experience *us* as conversing or having a discussion.

The distinction between empathic and non-empathic grouping is crucial to the notion of community as I understand it. When I constitute a bunch of bananas, I certainly do not include myself among the bananas. And when I encounter other persons, I sometimes constitute them as a group of much the same sort: e.g., as prisoners on death row or bums in the street. If I’m a really cold person, I may see these groups as just as foreign to me as a bunch of bananas. But constituting that kind of group requires only perception and is marked by the absence of empathy (hence, above, “if I’m really cold”). Husserl is keenly observant of this distinction:

... We can be for others, and they for us, mere objects; rather than being together in the unity of immediate, driving, common ... interest, we can get to know one another observingly, taking note of others’ acts of thought, acts of experiencing, ... as objective facts, but “disinterestedly,” without

joining in performing these acts, without critically assenting to them or taking exception to them. (*Crisis*, §28, p. 110.)

An important role ... is played by the following distinction ...: [on the one hand] persons ... are thematic as objects ... which one finds existing in the surrounding world, which one sees but has nothing to do with, nothing in common with: they are here and over there like mere things.... On the other hand, [there are] the other subjects as cosubjects, with whom one forms a community in experiencing, in thinking, in acting, with whom one has common praxis in the surrounding world.... (*Crisis*, Appendix III, "The Attitude of Natural Science and the Attitude of Humanistic Science," p. 328.)

Husserl continues this last passage by distinguishing a weaker and a stronger form of community. First the weaker:

We already have a certain "community" in being mutually "there" for one another in the surrounding world.... We experience one another as seeing the same objects – or in part the same – in the same world, which is a world for us. For the most part, as regards this common seeing, this is inauthentic experience, the empty understanding of the others and their experiential situation. (P. 328.)

And now the stronger:

But the community of persons, as a community of personal life and possibly as a lasting personal interrelation, is something special. A first step is explicitly to be vitally at one with the other person in the intuitive understanding of his experiencing, his life-situation, his activity, etc.... Every sort of communication naturally presupposes the commonality of the surrounding world, which is established as soon as we are persons for one another at all.... But it is something else to have them as fellows in communal life, to talk with them, to share their concerns and strivings, to be bound to them in friendship and enmity, love and hate. It is only here that we enter the sphere of the "social-historical" world. (Pp. 328-29.)

We will discuss each of these in turn.

VII. *Communal Constitution and "We-Subjectivity": The Role of Credibility*

"The first thing constituted in the form of community, and the foundation for all other intersubjectively common things, is the commonness of Nature....," Husserl says (*CM*, §55, p. 120). So, before trying to understand the stronger notion of community and communal constitution, let's consider more fully the somewhat simpler constitution of the natural world as a communal achievement. It contains an idea that will carry over to the higher-order case.

The world of nature becomes intersubjective for me, Husserl says, as soon as I recognize others as subjects who, like me, perceive the world from their own distinct perspectives. We communicate with each other, if not always through language then through gestures and natural bodily expressions, and we discover that our perceptions for the most part agree with and supplement each other. Thus, we come to experience each other as more than co-perceivers; we recognize each other as credible sources of information about what the world is like. We take seriously each other's reports about the world and our reactions to it, so much so that when disagreements occur either of us may – sometimes after further investigation, and sometimes immediately – declare oneself

mistaken and the other's experience authoritative. By giving each other status as *credible* co-perceivers, we become not just a *co-constituting* group but a *communally* constituting group.

Let's take an example. I see that object over there as an apple. I can directly perceive its color and shape from this perspective and, given my past experience, I constitute it as being an apple; I thus "apperceive" it as having numerous additional properties that I do not currently perceive but that – if I am correctly constituting the object – I would perceive if I were appropriately situated. The noema of this experience, my sense of what it is that I am experiencing, Husserl says, "predelineates" a horizon of other experiences that could confirm, correct, or disconfirm my constitution of it as being an apple: I could pick it up, check its weight, feel its skin, look at its other side, bite into it, and so on. I will say that such experiences belong to the "evidential horizon" of the apple. The point is this: in constituting *others* as credible co-constitutors, I make *their experiences* of the apple and *their communications* about the apple parts of *my* horizon of evidence concerning the apple. And if they experience me in the same way, then *my experiences* and *my communications* become part of *their* horizon of evidence.

The horizons of our experiences thus overlap and intertwine. "My" objects are constituted by my horizons and "theirs" by theirs, but these horizons are no longer distinct. There is just one apple that we see, and what is true or false about it is revealed – for them and for me – in their confirmations as well as mine. Thus, says Husserl, "... This common 'reality' ... is such only as an interpersonally emerging unity of ... *verification* to be *constated* in communal life" (*Crisis*, Appendix III, p. 321, my emphasis.) "The things posited by others are also mine: in empathy I participate in the other's positing" (*Ideas* II, §46, p. 177).

In this way, the stream of individual consciousness overflows its banks, so to say, to join with other streams in the work of constituting the objects of experience. Husserl says:

The total intentional accomplishment ... of the subjectivity in question ... is not that of the isolated subject. We are dealing, rather, with the entire intersubjectivity which is brought together in the accomplishment – and here the concepts of "what is," ... etc., are repeatedly relativized.... All the levels and strata through which the syntheses are interwoven, *intentionally overlapping as they are from subject to subject*, form a universal unity of synthesis.... In this regard we speak of the "*intersubjective constitution*" of the world ...; through this constitution, if we systematically uncover it, the world as it is for us becomes understandable as a structure of meaning formed out of elementary intentionalities. The being of these intentionalities themselves is nothing but *one meaning-formation operating together with another*, "*constituting*" *new meaning through synthesis*. (*Crisis*, §49, pp. 167-68, translation modified, my emphasis.)

In the following quotation from the *Crisis*, note this especially: "In reciprocal understanding, my experiences ... enter into contact with those of others, similar to the contact between individual series of experiences within my (one's own) experiential life...":

... In living with one another each one can take part in the life of the others. Thus in general the world exists not only for isolated men but for the community of men; and this is due to the fact that *even what is straightforwardly perceptual is communalized.*

In this communalization, too, there constantly occurs an alteration of validity through reciprocal correction. *In reciprocal understanding, my experiences and experiential acquisitions enter into contact with those of others, similar to the contact between individual series of experiences within my (one's own) experiential life;* and here again, intersubjective harmony of validity occurs, establishing what is "normal" and thus an intersubjective unity also comes about.... Intersubjective discrepancies show themselves often enough; but then, whether it is unspoken and even unnoticed, or is expressed through discussion and criticism, a unification is brought about or at least is certain in advance as possibly attainable by everyone. All this takes place in such a way that in the consciousness of each individual, and in the overarching community consciousness which has grown up through [social] contact, one and the same world achieves and continuously maintains constant validity.... "The" thing itself is ... always, and for everyone, a unity for consciousness of the openly endless multiplicity of changing experiences and experienced things, one's own and those of others. (*Crisis*, §47, pp. 163-64, my emphasis.)

Dagfinn Føllesdal has argued that Husserl's account of justification is a form of what John Rawls and Nelson Goodman have characterized as a search for "reflective equilibrium", wherein – among other considerations – no views are considered incorrigible and disparate views are weighed and assessed with the goal of maximizing overall coherence.¹⁵ The just quoted passage from the *Crisis* supports this characterization of how intersubjective *agreement* is reached (if not yet "justification"), and it explicitly includes considering the experiences of others as well as one's own in searching for this "equilibrium". Here is another passage:

... In an amazing fashion [each one's] intentionality reaches into that of the other and vice versa; ... thereby one's own and others' ontic validities combine in modes of agreement and discrepancy; and ... through reciprocal correction, agreeing consciousness of the same common world with the same things finally achieves validity – the same things that are viewed in one way by one and another way by the other. (*Crisis*, §71, p. 254.)

The kind of communal constitution that we have described, where co-constitutors give credence to each other and take the truth about the things they constitute to be determined by others as well as themselves – where their horizons of evidence merge and mutually support or correct each other –, is not achieved by a plurality of subjects acting independently. Rather, says Husserl, it is the product of "we-subjectivity":

... We, in living together, have the world pre-given in this "together," as the world valid as existing for us and to which we, together, belong, the world as world for all.... Constantly functioning in wakeful life, we also function together, in the manifold ways of considering, together, objects pre-given to us in common, thinking together, valuing, planning, acting together. Here we find ... *we-subjectivity*.... (*Crisis*, §28, p. 109, my emphasis.)

¹⁵ Føllesdal (1988).

VIII. *Communities of “Persons”: Feeling, Valuing, Willing*

We now understand what it means to see others as experiencing the world from their perspectives as we do from ours, to “pair” or “group” ourselves with them, to grant credibility to their experiences as well as to our own, and to join with them as a “we-subject” communally constituting the common world of objective nature. We may thereby see the whole of humanity as collectively forming a “community” in the weaker sense Husserl characterized for us at the end of section VI above. But it is not yet a community in the stronger sense, not a social community of “persons”. In fact, Husserl’s characterization of “we-subjectivity” in the passage just quoted mentions something we have yet to address: “valuing, planning, acting together”. Let us briefly explore these dimensions of personhood and community.

True communities are interest-oriented. But the global community that constitutes inter-subjective nature (and nothing else) is too general in its interests, and thus too inclusive, to be a true community of persons. Within that global community, the only communal interests are the objective, perceivable, characteristics of things. Thus, credible co-constitutors of nature include everyone considered “normal” in sensory abilities (including the ability to empathically apperceive others as fellow human beings).¹⁶ In communities geared toward more special interests, normality and credibility do not always coincide: the most credible scientists and philosophers, e.g., frequently fall outside the “norm” – if the notion of “normal” scientists or philosophers makes sense at all.¹⁷ Furthermore, Husserl insists, it is generally not the naturalistic properties of things that interest us in ordinary life:

Concepts such as the valuable, the beautiful, the amiable, the attractive, the perfect, the good, the useful, act, work, etc., as well as ... concepts like state, church, right, religion, and other concepts, that is, *objectivities to whose constitution valuing or practical acts have essentially contributed* – all these ... are not concepts pertaining to nature.... (*Ideas II*, §11, p. 27, my emphasis.)¹⁸

While all of our experiences presuppose the world as a whole as their horizontal background, our interests and goals delineate a narrower sphere of things with which we are actually concerned and around which our activities revolve – what Husserl calls our “surrounding world” (“*Umwelt*”). And the more particular these interests and goals are, the more specialized will be the community that shares them and the more particular the domain of interest they define.¹⁹

¹⁶ Credible community members need not even be “normal” in *all* their sensory abilities: consider a blind person’s reports about what she has *heard*.

¹⁷ Zahavi, *loc. cit.*, pp. 90-91, sees normality as playing a role in communal constitution much like that of my notion of credibility. But I see normality, at best, as a condition for being considered credible. (Husserl’s idea of normality is highly nuanced, though: see Fricke (2012, this volume), pp. 200-215.)

¹⁸ Cf. *Crisis*, Appendix III, p. 318.

¹⁹ See Frode Kjosavik’s discussion of Husserl’s notion of a “particular world” (*Sonderwelt*) in Kjosavik (2012, this volume). “A particular world is directed towards a determinate human end that is shared within

In the natural attitude, the human being's subject matter ... is everything that momentarily affects him or that concerns him enduringly, possibly becoming a fixed habituality (as in a vocation): in "seriousness" or in play, in effecting or creating things of value or things without value, temporary or lasting things, accomplishing things in egoistic or in the communal interest, as an individual or as a functionary of the community in communal work.... (*Crisis*, Appendix III, p. 321.)

Conscious of the world as a horizon, we live for our particular ends, whether as momentary and changing ones or as an enduring goal that guides us.... In this case a self-enclosed "world"-horizon is constituted. Thus as men with a vocation we may permit ourselves to be indifferent to everything else, ... i.e., we have an eye only to what is "reality" here (what is correct, true in relation to this goal) or "unreality" (the incorrect, the mistaken, the false).... It may be, here, that this ruling end is ultimately a communal end, i.e., a personal life-task which is a partial task ... within a communal task, so that the individual personal undertaking of work functions concurrently, and consciously so for each of the "participants," in a communal undertaking. (*Crisis*, Appendix VII, "The Life-World and the World of Science," pp. 379-80.)

In a special sense, of course, we call science, art, military service, etc., our "vocation," but as normal human beings we are constantly (in a broadened sense) involved in many "vocations" (interested attitudes) at the same time: we are at once fathers, citizens, etc. (*Crisis*, §35, p. 136.)

Members of a community have *common* aims and interests, and as Husserl says above, some of these are communal interests and ends that engage the members in communal undertakings. Members of the local bird-watchers club, for example, will all have an interest in birds and bird-watching and share such individual goals as having fun and spotting rare avian species. They will also have *community* goals: I want the *club* to have fun birding, and I'll be disappointed if I have fun but others do not; cataloging all species of birds in a certain region is a *club* goal, one that I share and do my part to accomplish. Sharing the aims and interests of a community and its members may be seen as one of the conditions for the credibility requisite to belonging to the community and co-constituting its domain of interest. Birders will scarcely consider people who have no interest in birds or bird-watching to be credible sources of information about birds or birding activity. Nonetheless, because the sharing of aims and interests is critical, I shall treat it as an additional, if not completely distinct, criterion for we-subjectivity and the constitution of community.

Shared interests imply shared values. Birders are interested in bird-watching because they find birds "pretty", or "delightful", or "fascinating" and because they find observing birds to be a "fun", "worthwhile", or "good" thing to do. While redness is an objective property, the birder does not simply see a *red* cardinal but (perhaps because of its color) a *beautiful* cardinal. Birds and bird-watching are thus experienced as having value properties.

that world," he says, "and it is therefore also called a 'Zweckwelt' or 'Werkwelt', i.e., a purposeful world and a work-world." (p. 18).

Shared values imply shared feelings or sentiments and emotions. “... Each consciousness which originally constitutes a value-Object as such,” Husserl says, “necessarily has in itself a component belonging to the sphere of *feelings*” (*Ideas II*, §4, p. 11, emphasis modified). Birders get pleasure or satisfaction from their interactions with birds and other birders, and these feelings ground their experience of birds and bird-watching as “good” or “worthwhile”. Thus, pleasure and displeasure reveal things to us as themselves *being* pleasant or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, valuable or worthless, etc. Furthermore, because we have needs and desires, things can reveal themselves as filling these needs or satisfying these desires. We then constitute them as having practical value – as being good or bad for these or those purposes – for the community as well as ourselves.

Experience teaches me ... that an object ... is “combustible” material (at first without any practical bearing). Henceforth I can use it as fuel; it has value for me as a possible source of heat. That is, it has value for me with reference to the fact that with it I can produce the heating of a room and thereby pleasant sensations of warmth for myself and others. I apprehend it from this point of view: ... it is *useful* to me for that. Others apprehend it in the same way, and it acquires an intersubjective use-value and in a social context is appreciated and is valuable as serving such and such a purpose, as useful to man, etc.... Subsequently it is further seen as a “commodity” sold for that purpose, etc. (*Ideas II*, §50, pp. 197-98.)

Like shared aims and interests, shared values and feelings may be seen as a condition for the credibility requisite to belonging to a community. Persons who do not share its feelings about birds and bird-watching are not credible constitutors within the community of birders. Thus, while a member of the club who *does* share its positive feelings and valuing may credibly declare a particular bird to be not worth further pursuit, and perhaps persuade her companions to break off the chase, a guest participant who is only bored by watching birds and who finds the whole enterprise worthless will not. Again, however, because of its central role in the notion of community that I am trying to articulate, I shall treat the sharing of values and sentiments as an additional, if not completely distinct, criterion for we-subjectivity and community.

While each member of a community has her or his own sentiments and acts of valuing, the *community's* values are *communally* constituted – a product of “we-subjectivity” in much the same way as the constitution of objective nature. Indeed, Husserl says, feelings play a role in the constitution of values analogous to the role of sensations in the constitution of physical objects. He contrasts “the sensations which exercise a constitutive function as regards ... sense-things” with

... *sensations belonging to totally different groups*, e.g., the “sensuous” feelings, the sensations of pleasure and pain, the sense of well-being that permeates and fills the whole Body, the general malaise of “corporeal indisposition,” etc. Thus here belong groups of *sensations which, for the acts of valuing* – intentional experiences in the sphere of feelings – or *for the constitution of values* as intentional correlates of them, *play a role ... analogous to that played by the primary sensations ... for the constitution of Objects as spatial things.* (*Ideas II*, §39, p. 160, translation modified.)

This means, among other things, that feelings provide *evidence* that the thing or event that evokes them actually *has* the value property constituted on their basis. But, as is the case with perception, this evidence is not incorrigible and can be overthrown by counter-evidence. The wine tastes unpleasantly sour to me and I constitute it as having gone bad. But when I try it a bit later it tastes fine, and by the time the meal is over I even decide that it's actually quite good. Here we see that valuing grounded in feelings, like perceptions grounded in sensations, constitute their objects incompletely – perspectively, if you please. In initially declaring the wine “bad” I did not mean merely that my first taste of it was unpleasant; also implied or “predelineated” by the noema of my experience were anticipations about how the wine should appear in further possible experiences if it actually has gone bad. My valuing experience included a horizon of evidence concerning the value I constituted the wine as having, and the evidence provided by my actual further experiences proved incompatible with my initial constitution.

We frequently recognize some of our feelings as idiosyncratic and we do not take them as evidence for the *objective* value of things. I don't like tuna fish, it tastes and smells awful to me, but I draw from that a judgment about *me* rather than about tuna fish. In the wine-with-dinner example just given, I experienced the value of the wine as transcendent of my immediate experience, as having more to it than was evidenced in that initial experience. But, especially if I were dining alone, I might not think of this transcendence as extending beyond what *my own* experiences could reveal.

Our interest here, however, is not with individual or personal values, but with values that are communally constituted as objective. Consider our example again, and now suppose I'm dining with friends. Again I taste the wine, it displeases me, and I proclaim it to have “gone bad”. We decide to pass it around for others to taste, they all find it pleasing, and they say it's a perfectly good wine; but when I try it again later it still tastes unpleasantly sour to me. If I consider the others to be *credible* wine-tasters, then their feelings about the wine and their value judgments based on those feelings will count along with mine as evidence about what the *objective* value of the wine actually *is*. Thus, as with the intersubjective constitution of nature (see section VII above), *my* horizon of evidence concerning the value of the wine will include not only *my* possible experiences of the wine but *theirs* as well. We *communally* constitute the wine as “good” and I, as a member of this dinner party of friends, allow my initial constitution to be overruled or corrected by others whom I trust. I agree that there's nothing wrong with the wine; I just don't like it.

We have now seen that community members are *communal* constitutors of the natural and the value characteristics of the things in their domain of interest. But a community and its members do not merely experience their world; they *act* on and within it. They *have* common interests and aims, they *recognize* the value of achieving their aims, but action also requires acts of will. Husserl recognizes that consciousness is not only cognitive and affective, it is also *volitional*²⁰ – and in communities, volitional

²⁰ See Peucker (2012, this volume), pp. 45-60.

consciousness, too, is communalized. We've seen that credible community members influence or motivate one another's constitution of facts and values; they also motivate one another's willing and doing.²¹ I communicate to you either something that I want our community to do or something that I myself want to do, and I let you know what I want you to do toward that end. You communicate back to me your willingness or unwillingness to do it, and your answer influences whether and how the project proceeds. If, through reciprocal feedback, it becomes one that you and the others will help me achieve, then we have a communal aim and our individual activities dovetail in service of a communal activity driven by a communal will. Husserl says:

Within the multiplicity of wills divided among the individual persons it [the community] has one will identically constituted for them all, a will which has no other place, no other substrate than the communicative multiplicity.... Each ego is a subject of action, but each in a function, and in this way the connected unity of all is a full subject.²²

John Drummond puts the point nicely:

Each person freely assumes his or her own role and function in the larger community, recognizing the fulfillment of that role as his or her contribution to the striving of the community as a whole, a striving which involves an activity irreducible to the activity of the individual members of the community.²³

IX. What is a "We-Subject"? What is a Community?

To draw together the various aspects of this account of community and communal constitution, I propose a thesis and three corollaries:

Thesis. A "we-subject" is a collection of persons whose members are joined by relations of empathy and empathic grouping; share common interests, feelings, and values; grant credibility to one another in co-constituting their domain of interests and its values; and engage in communal activities coordinated and driven by a communal will.

Corollary 1. A community is a "we-subject".

Corollary 2. Communal constitution is constitution accomplished by a "we-subject".

Corollary 3. A communal world is a domain of common concerns communally constituted by a "we-subject".

Note that this characterization of community singles out the following features:²⁴

²¹ See *Ideas* II, §51, pp. 202-204.

²² Husserl (1973b), pp. 200-201. Quoted by Drummond (1996), p. 251.

²³ Drummond (1996), p. 251.

²⁴ I do not claim that each of these features is necessary for being a community (though I think most are) nor that all of them together are sufficient. And I grant that there are different notions of community, some

- the members of a community are “persons”,
- they are joined by empathic relations, i.e., they experience each other as persons and as “kinsmen”,
- they are united by common interests and feelings concerning a particular domain of activity,
- they have shared values,
- they are co-constitutors of their domain of interests and activity, including its values,
- they grant credibility to one another in constituting that domain, i.e., they *trust* one another,
- their activities are coordinated and driven by a communal will to achieve communal aims.

It should be clear that I take it to be important that the members of a community treat their fellows as *credible* co-constitutors of their particular “world” or community – they must *trust* one another’s constitutions of their surroundings. That’s because I think trust or credibility is crucial to turning *co*-constitution (a plurality of subjects, perhaps coincidentally, constituting the same object in the same way) into *communal* constitution and turning a *plurality* of subjects into a “*we*-subject”: for creating, as Husserl says, “... possibilities not only for a parallel and mutually understood comportment to objects as the ones of the community’s surrounding world but also for a joint-unitary comportment ... in which they participate communally as members of a whole that binds them together” (*Ideas* II, §51, pp. 201-202). And I believe this to be true generally, not only for lofty communities, such as the community of scientists, but also for such mundane communities as a bird-watching club, a clique of pre-teen girls or boys, or even a street gang. Of course, credibility and trust have different meanings in these different communities, varying in accord with their different interests, feelings, values, and wills.

Note, finally, that this account of community does not characterize a community primarily in terms of how it is constituted or experienced by others or even by its own members. A community is characterized as a *we-subject* and thus by *how and what it constitutes*. In this regard, a community achieves its character in just the same way Husserl says a transcendental ego achieves its: not by how it is experienced but by how it experiences.²⁵ And this is just as it should be if a community is a personality of a higher order: a *subject*, first and foremost.

of which may put heavy emphasis on features I’ve not mentioned (e.g., history and tradition). But I hope my characterization captures some important features of communities of a certain kind, and that other notions of community may be interestingly and fruitfully explored in comparison.

²⁵ See *CM*, §§31-33.

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