

Following and analyzing a human being:
On the continuity and singularity of an individual

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It does not seem to bother researchers to have to follow and analyze a social group, a law, an organization, an institution or an object through people's discourses or actions. However, the following of an individual seems troublesome or simply unwanted, as if it was too difficult or not necessary to observe a human being in detail. Whenever a particular individual arises in the description of a social scientist, it is generally in order to illustrate a common behavior, activity, representation or life course, which is considered as typical in a given society or community. Without denying that crucial discrepancies or disagreements exist between all the different approaches endorsed in the social sciences, it appears that they are the same in one respect: none of them tackle the empirical unity that each human constitutes. Therefore, by looking at the same person in the same situation, researchers focus only on generic aspects of the human individual observed, depending on their chosen theoretical point of view. Among other possible examples, we can imagine that a Bourdieusian sociologist would show a dominant driven by his *habitus*, an interactionist would depict an actor playing a role on a scene, while others would describe a priest, whose actions fit well within Weber's *ideal type*.

To put it differently, none of the existing approaches in social sciences are able to address the following questions: how one can know that Mister X is not Mister Y even though they belong to the same social class or have a similar career path? How each of them knows that he is not the other? And how the so-called social and cultural dimensions of their beings

really concern and affect their respective lives? In recent years, however, a specific method has been offered precisely in order to overcome this crucial shortfall (Piette 2015a, 2016). This method is known as *phenomenography* and aims to take the continuity and the singularity of every single human being seriously.

Whereas Lévi-Strauss writes in his seminal book, *The Savage Mind*, “I believe the ultimate goal of the human sciences to be not to constitute, but to dissolve man” (1968, 247), the phenomenographer argues, on the contrary, for radical detailed observations and descriptions of the qualities and acts of one human, *one at a time*, in the process of moving from one place to another in order to include, in the writing of his idiosyncrasies, the density and complexity of his existence but also sometimes its banality and passivity.

Phenomenography is fundamentally based on an empirical principle, and is a demanding, rigorous work of description, which can highlight, or even supplement, the incompleteness of philosophical or sociological theories with regard to the understanding of humans, as they really exist. At every stage of research, a phenomenography retains the maximum number of details, as well as various elements that fall outside the scope of ideal types or overly exclusive concepts. These include those descriptive elements that usually end up in researchers’ dustbin, i.e. those reminders that *a priori* seem not relevant for the theory, in particular the individual characteristics of the persons described.

In other words, according to the phenomenographic perspective, when clarifying one single situation, it is preferable to add up and complement different theoretical paradigms, due to the focus on *one* individual, rather than apply one paradigm that excludes others to highlight one specific aspect of reality. Furthermore, beyond this adding-up and complementarity, or juxtaposition, there are still “leftovers” that are certainly essential regarding the human observed and thereby deserve renewed attention. As we will see, this phenomenographic work

of description involves at least two important implications, regarding ontology and methodology, which we propose to unfold throughout the present chapter.

Our first aim is to discuss several theoretical implications involved in our proposal, which consists of focusing more seriously on human beings. To do this, we will first start with a critique of the way social sciences and anthropology have been describing individuals so far and we will then propose the notion of “volume of being” (Piette 2017b) in order to clarify our understanding of individuals as human beings. We will also insist on the entirety of this volume of being, which is not simply a surface and entails various visible, invisible, inner, outer, pre-reflective and reflective elements. Therefore, we will argue for the necessity of integrating observations and descriptions from both a third- and a first-person perspective to grasp the different aspects of the volume.

The second aim of this chapter will consist of presenting empirical methods and research techniques, which allow us to follow and to analyze the continuity and singularity of an individual. We will introduce this methodological part by defining the radicalism of the phenomenographic approach compared to methods developed by recent phenomenological approaches in anthropology. This will offer the opportunity to provide basic principles of phenomenographic observations. To illustrate these various methodological proposals, we will draw from the first author’s PhD research, which is based on a close collaboration with LK, a rapper from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, over more than five years. We will mostly focus on what she calls a “videophenomenography” (Kneubühler 2017), which corresponds to the moment where LK agreed to film himself, alone, during the creation of a verse.

What about Human Beings?

This first part of our chapter entails a theoretical scope regarding our very idea whereby it is important to consider human beings seriously. More precisely, we will develop our argument under three successive sections. In the first section, we will address three restrictions

observed within the social sciences that prevent researchers from seeing human beings as such. In the second section, we will propose an ontological argument in favor of following and analyzing human individuals. And finally, we will expose in the third section the core of our proposal by defining the notion of “volume of being” and presenting its empirical implications.

The human individual as what?

To those who would raise the objection that social sciences in general, and anthropology in particular, look directly at humans, we would answer that they do indeed look at them, but that they are steeped in three decisive restrictions, which prevent them from seeing human beings *as such*, even in a minimal sense. First, they are restricted by homogenizing operations, often very early in the research process, through which humans are described and analyzed as sharing a set of sociocultural traits. Malinowski is very explicit on this subject, saying that his goal is to work on people not “*as individuals*” but “*as members of a human community*” (1922, 23). This is a way of working on human beings without them, without each of them.

The second restriction is the reduction of humans to a few skills (interactional, cognitive, psychological), which are themselves able to be homogenized among all members or actors of the entity that is supposed to be described and detailed: an action, an activity, an event, a group. Each individual, absorbed along with others, is linked directly to an *as*: not only *as* a member of a group, but also *as* he or she performs an action, or *as* he or she is governed by a social or cognitive structure, or even *as* he or she uses one mental schema or another. Furthermore, depending on the approach, this restriction can reach the point where the human himself is suspended and circumvented in favor of actions or relations that have become the very objects of intelligibility. These first two restrictions indicate the persistent lack of a proper theoretical definition of what a “human being” consists of in social sciences, besides the fact that they are *social* beings – a “social” itself often non-defined –, which seems to come from nowhere.

By observing this situation as a spectator, one might wonder whether a shift is not in fact operating with the emergence of the so-called *ontological turn* in social anthropology. Unfortunately, far from being interested in human beings *as beings* or even in humans at all, the authors committed in that turn fall into the third restriction we wish to outline, which concerns the weight given to nonhumans (e.g. collective beings, gods, objects, cosmologies, scientific facts) in recent years. Despite the diversity of goals pursued (Kelly 2014), what is clearly at stake in that turn is the gathering of relativist standpoints regarding the existence of an objective world and the status of human beings vis-à-vis other kinds of being.

The attention is therefore directed towards themes as the difference of “worlds,” the narratives and discourses uttered to depict and create those worlds, or relations between beings (or directly between their actions) rather than beings themselves. In short, humans are always a pretext to study something else, something either nonhuman by definition or something that is considered to have the same properties as humans who are seen as a type of being among other things. The phenomenographic approach seeks to overcome those three restrictions, which generally prevent social scientists from seeing the human individual as an empirical unity that deserves a specific attention.

Ontological argument in favor of following and analyzing a human individual

Against these relativist, and mostly narrative, approaches, our claim is that human beings are fundamental for anthropology and social sciences and we will address in this section what we consider to be a serious ontological argument in order to underpin that claim. First and foremost, let us outline the necessity to keep separated ontological inquiries from methodological injunctions at the beginning of the research since they both are completely mixed up within the debate generated by the ontological turn. For instance, in a recent book written by Holbraad and Pedersen (2017) on this debate, we can read: “As such, the ontological turn asks ontological questions without taking ontology (or indeed ontologies) as an answer”

(ix), it “is the methodological injunction to keep this horizon perpetually open” (x), and it also “poses ontological questions to solve epistemological problems” (x).

This problematic mirroring between ontology and methodology might remind us of an old proposal developed by Latour (1993) who argued for a methodological symmetry whereby every being or thing need to be treated without discrimination or hierarchy in order to show their common “variable geometry.” According to this position, they all are, objects as well as humans, the result of specific assemblages and trajectories. As such, even though all beings are not equally strong with respect to their different relational constitutions, they all are equally real. One risk of this proposal, when pushed to its limits is to forget that the attention was initially focused on assemblages and, therefore, to confuse the constituting relations with the very essence of beings. Although we would not reject altogether Latour’s methodological proposal, which rightly encourages researchers “to follow the actors,” we strongly reject its ontological counterpart, since we do not consider human beings to have a variable geometry along with “air springs,” “society,” “matter,” or “consciousness,” which all are considered as social actants by Latour (1993, 86).

Even if phenomenography, as a method, needs to be based on an extremely detailed description of a human as an empirical unity, it entails, if not an overall “ontology” – and if so, a necessarily “asymmetrical ontology” to put it in a Latourian terminology –, at least a minimal conception of the human being that enables us to differentiate him or her from other beings and to regard them as the background of social “stuff.” As reflected in philosophy’s classic debates, an anthropology that sets out to be anthro-focused cannot separate an action, connection or experience from the person who performs and lives it. Not without irony, Russell mentions what he considers an obvious fact posited by Aristotle, a position that can be useful to highlight our view:

Suppose I say ‘there is such a thing as the game of football’, most people would regard the remark as a truism. But if I were to infer that football could exist without football players, I should be rightly held to be talking nonsense. Similarly, it would be held, there is such a thing as parenthood, but only because there are parents; there is redness, but only because they are red things. And this dependence is thought to be not reciprocal: the men who play football would still exist even if they never played football; things which are usually sweet may turn sour; and my face, which is usually red, may turn pale without ceasing to be my face (Russell 1995, 176).

Consequently, a good starting point for us seems to be to attribute a lower ontological status to social configurations or objects than to human beings, on the basis that it is impossible to discover such organizations without humans.

In the context of human and social sciences, we thereby consider a social organization or a collective being to be an indication of the presence of humans, instead of the reverse. Therefore, even when we want to follow a collective being, an idea or a project, we inevitably have to follow humans, because the latter create the former. Contrarily to these other kinds of beings, humans exist *per se* and not *through* something else. This is the reason why we argue that a human being is a specific being who has to be studied and followed as such, in order not to fragment his or her entirety. We can then push further the comment from Russell, by adding the fact that the same person who plays football also does other things before, after and even during, to a certain extent, the game. In other words, he or she constitutes a full-blown unity. As Cavell (1999) puts it, “we are, each of us, bodies, i.e., embodied; each of us is this one and not that, each here and not there, each now and not then” (369), and each of us always continues to be so throughout all lived situations. In sum, the very principle we wish to defend is twofold: on the one hand, an irreducible singularity, namely there are individuals – those ones, each one

–, which anyone can identify and designate as such, and on the other hand, an inescapable continuity in which every individual is taken.

The Volume of Being: a concept to grasp the singularity and continuity of humans

As should have become clear by now, our perspective consists of focusing on the continuity of one individual, neither fragmented nor absorbed a priori in other beings or entities. In pursuing this goal, it is crucial not to follow only a role, a trajectory, an action, or even the experience of an event. In these cases, we run the risk of missing the entity on which we request a specific focus: the human individual. This entity, we name it the “volume of being,” this individual here, that individual there. We will define now this concept of “volume” in order to offer minimal theoretical clarifications with regard to our conception of human beings. This idea of volume will allow us to outline the entirety of an individual and the different points of view we need to consider within the scope of a phenomenographic observation, which seeks to do justice to this entirety.

The meanings of Latin root words can shed light on the characteristics of a volume. *Volumen* designates a roll of papyrus forming a book or part of a book. Other meanings of *volumen* are coil, twist or convolution. In Latin, the verb *volvere* indicates a set of actions that could be tracked as essential to the movement of a human volume: rolling, unfolding time and months, but also being moved in one’s heart, and meditating in one’s mind. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, the word “volume” was initially “a scroll of parchment or papyrus containing written matter.” Other meanings were added: all the notebooks joined by binding, or “a single book or a bound collection of printed sheets”; a written work; and also the portion of space occupied by a body. A volume is also measurable, whether this measurement concerns a mass, a sound, air or blood. In connection with these meanings, a volume can also indicate intensities and modalities of existence or presence.

Thus, a volume cannot be pejoratively associated with geometry. The word “volume” presents an extraordinary lexical field, ranging from the motion and flow of time or thoughts to three-dimensional solids, due to its ability to contain. A volume is what moves and contains, as well as the “sheets” that are contained. A volume fundamentally lives and experiences a range of manifold emotions and thoughts and possesses an embodied consciousness, which endows it with an awareness of its own singularity and continuity across space and time. Insofar as it contains various visible, invisible, inner, outer, pre-reflective and reflective elements; insofar as it moves around, the volume constitutes a singular perceptible unit, beyond his roles and activities, having a set of changes, without this empirical unit being called into question, without it ceasing to be recognized or experienced as such. Therefore, methodologically, a volume of being can always be perceived from two sides: from an observational point of view, on the one hand, and from an experiential point of view on the other. In other words, the volume of being as a concept calls for observations from a third-person perspective as well as from a first-person perspective, knowing that both are considered as two points of view that fully belong to the same approach, as long as they both concern the same unity.

Lalande’s (1926) definition is perfectly adequate for the characterization of a volume of being: “that which is modified by change while remaining the same” (1048). The volume of being enables us to draw attention to the fact that properties, qualities and accidents (which all play different roles in the formation of the empirical unit) arise, settle and change, but they never completely change the entirety of this unit. In this respect, the concept of volume can offer the very unity to found a real anthropology, as the science of human beings. As Varela (1979) writes, “Unity (the fact of being distinguishable from one’s environment and therefore from other unities)” remains a unity “independently of the transformations it may undergo” and “is the sole condition necessary for the existence of a studied field” (61-62).

This is to stress the fact that the volume is never only a multiplicity of roles or selves but also, in every part of the world, a coherent continuity crossing and permeating these, based on a body, gestures and cognitive abilities that become stabilized in the course of existence. Thus, at one and the same time, the volume holds itself together and something holds it together, and this is of course never altogether fixed, but it undergoes only superficial and fragmentary changes at each moment. This “something” can be viewed as a kind of “kernel,” as long as this does not designate a substantial dimension that would only be discovered once the “layers” – i.e. the various roles – have been removed, according to Peer Gynt’s famous tirade (Ibsen 2009), but instead refers to identical characteristics that run across these layers and roles.

To recapitulate the core idea of the volume of being as a concept: it is not a simple surface. Fundamentally, it encompasses a plurality of aspects conceived as a whole, so that it is never reducible to one of these aspects. By this conceptualization, we presuppose that every human is singular and constitutes a full-blown entirety. From a methodological point of view, as we already stressed, the combination of two main perspectives are necessary. On the one hand, the phenomenographer can observe this full-blown entirety from a third-person perspective, in the same way an ethologist, for example, would observe a living organism. In a sense, from this third-person perspective, the emphasis is rather placed on the *following* part of the research.

On the other hand, the phenomenographer cannot end there and has to also consider the subjectivity of the human individual followed from a first-person perspective. This implies, at some point, a deepening of the singularity of certain lived moments. We are situated here on the *analyzing* part of the phenomenographic approach. Last but not least, in both cases, aside from the exploration of as many details as possible, the common interrogation should target what persists throughout the concrete existence of singular humans. In other words, the phenomenographic approach is more interested in the *how* a person is living, namely in *the way*

a human is living, functioning, experiencing, evolving but nevertheless remains the same singularity, than in the contents of the situations, hardships or periods of life he or she is going through.

The embedding of a multiplicity of perspectives and aspects within the same approach contributes greatly to the a priori non-discrimination regarding what should count more for defining humans. Moreover, it can be helpful to overcome a dualistic framework of research. Interestingly, working on the issue of personal persistence is also a point made by Fuchs (2017) about the diachronic unity of selfhood based on bodily existence. Indeed, he shows that the “current debate on personal persistence is characterized by a fundamental dichotomy which reflects its Cartesian basis” (p. 294).

This dichotomy opposes, on the one side, those who advocate for a “*psychological continuity*” and link “the persistence of the person with the constancy of the first-person perspective in retrospection” and, on the other side, those who advocate for a “*physical or biological approach*” and “look at diachronic identity from a third-person perspective” (p. 294). On the contrary, Fuchs provides us with an original view, which aims at integrating both perspectives: one that refers to the “experiential self of bodily subjectivity,” and another that rather leads us to consider the “autopoietic self of the living organism.” His conclusion is the following: “The continuity of both subjective life and organic life are necessary for us to persist as human beings over time, for they are only two conjoined aspects of the unified process of life” (p. 305).

The phenomenographic approach is completely in favor of this kind of “integrative view” to grasp the specific continuity of human beings. We can nevertheless suggest that, according to our view, selfhood is not a synonymous of volume. We rather conceive the self as *a part* of what could constitute a volume of being. Most likely, it constitutes an important part of the volume, especially with regard to the exploration of the first-person perspective, which

is far less explored in the social sciences compared with the third-person perspective. Indeed, social scientists are used to dealing with a sense of self that can easily be examined through narratives, considering a speaking human being and a sense of self that is certainly reflective, communicable due to language, observable, and thereby graspable from a third-person perspective. Our approach in terms of volume of being embraces those dimensions. However, we do not remove from it elements that are not discussed during the observable ongoing activities and that could only be grasp through an experiential way. Insofar as the volume of being, from a first-person perspective, refers to a human being conscious to *being-in-time*, one of those continuous “experiential elements” is consciousness.

Since phenomenography is concerned with the first-person perspective of experiential life, we cannot overlook what the phenomenological tradition has said on those issues, a tradition that enables us to take into account not only a reflective level of self-consciousness but also, as a presupposition of observation, a pre-reflective one whose existence is “logically and ontogenetically more primitive” (Zahavi 2014, 14)¹. Interested in the very subjectivity of experience and the existence of a “diachronically unified consciousness” (73), the phenomenologist Zahavi (2014) draws attention to the permanence of the “for-me-ness” dimension of experience beyond its variable intentional structures or contents:

For every possible experience we have, each of us can say: whatever it is like for me to have this experience, it is *for me* it is like that to have it. What-it-is-like-ness is properly speaking what-it-is-like-*for-me*-ness. Although I live through various different experiences, there is consequently something experiential that remains the same, namely, their first-personal character. All the different experiences are characterized by

¹ Let us specify here that phenomenology has to be considered as *one possible way* of exploring the first-person perspective of the volume of being *among others*. The first author privileges phenomenology in her ongoing research in order to understand subjectivity and consciousness of individuals, this is why the phenomenological approach is particularly developed in our chapter.

a dimension of *mineness*, or *for-me-ness*, and we should distinguish the plurality of changing experiences from their persisting *dative of manifestation*. (p. 19)

Thus, when we say that a person is experiencing something, this person does not have only an *experience of* that thing. The phenomenographic approach certainly finds in this dimension a noteworthy aspect to think about with regards to the volume, because “for-me-ness” is not about the “what” of experience but it rather highlights the “how”: “It refers to the first-personal presence of all my experiential content” (p. 22). To designate this *manner of experiencing*, Zahavi (2014) offers a minimal notion of self-consciousness, also called the “experiential self,”² which is pre-reflective, pre-linguistic and then would exist from the beginning of our experiential life: “This would be a form of self-consciousness that precedes the mastery of language and the ability to form full-blown rational judgments and propositional attitudes” (p. 14).

Even if the phenomenographer, as every empirical researcher, is fated to observe another human, literally, from the outside, our claim is that it is still crucial to do justice to this kind of pre-reflectivity of oneself which can minimally—and it is already demanding given the context depicted previously—allow us to detail rightly the different aspects of the first-person perspective of the individual followed. This is particularly so given that that very basic self-consciousness is “non-observational” even for oneself, so to speak, due to its dimension of self-manifestation: “experience is given, not as an object, but precisely as subjectively lived through. On this view, my intentional experience is lived through (*erlebt*), but it does not appear in an objectified manner, it is neither seen nor heard nor thought about” (Zahavi 2014, p. 16).

² From a phenomenological perspective, it is important to stress that studying consciousness does not imply to commit oneself to a form of dualism. This is still a typical concern raised by opponents of phenomenology who see in self-consciousness “a kind of self-enclosed solitary interiority” (Zahavi 2014, p. 95). As long as one is defending an embodied and embedded definition of experience, “there is as such nothing in the notion of experiential self that makes it incompatible or in tension with a strong emphasis on the fundamental intentionality or being-in-the-world of consciousness. [...] It is no coincidence that most phenomenological accounts of experience have precisely emphasized the unity of world-awareness and self-experience” (p. 96).

The challenge for the phenomenographic approach is then to maintain the same kind of interrogation, namely regarding what is persistent across time and what happens beyond or below language, even when considering the third-person perspective. To that end, it is important to view the volume as an observational reference point when following its continuous movements, revealing its gradual variations, but above all to observe elements that indicate what we call a *style of existence*. As Merleau-Ponty (2012) argues, regarding the continuity of experience and ways of existing:

My freedom can deflect my life from its spontaneous sense, but only through a series of shifts, by first joining with it, and not through any absolute creation. All explanations of my behavior in terms of my past, my temperament, or my milieu are thus true, but only on condition of not considering them as separable contributions, but rather as moments of my total being whose sense I could make explicit in different directions, without our ever being able to say if it is I who give them their sense or if I receive it from them. I am a psychological and historical structure. Along with existence, I received a way of existing, or a style. All of my actions and thoughts are related to this structure, and even a philosopher's thought is merely a way of making explicit his hold upon the world, which is all he is. (p. 482)

This way of existing, which targets what remains the same in the concrete individual, has to be found once more in *how* someone is moving and acting or being present in a situation and not in the goals of the situation, from roles to roles, from layers to layers, in gestures, words, or better yet in the modalities of performing certain acts, of speaking certain words, in the succession of moments and situations. This is how phenomenography as a method precisely targets a temporally continuous observation in order to be able to show first and foremost this continuity in a volume, this continuous singularity.

To conclude this definitional section, let us clarify an important point with regard to the very aims of the phenomenographic approach, aims that lie within the general scope of the notion of volume of being. Indeed, phenomenography begins with the uniqueness and singularity of one human's life and aims to continue looking at this very singular life for as long as possible without immediately dissolving it into more general features or characteristics. However, this should be seen as an initial phase of the research since an important long-term purpose of phenomenography is to draw comparisons between these singular lives in order to ultimately target universal, common and shared traits of human beings. The very idea is thereby to fill, in return, the concept of the volume with genuine aspects found in empirical observations and the collection of detailed multilevel descriptions of concrete and embodied individuals.

Interestingly, our view finds an enlightening parallel with the purposes defined by Petitmengin and Lachaux (2013) regarding the encounter between neurophenomenology and the method of elicitation interview:

iGBM [intracranial Gamma-Band Mapping] provides therefore a direct picture of the neural dynamics of singular, unique experiences, in single individuals. This is crucial for our project, whose objective is not to match generic experiential structures, in which the specificities of individual experiences would be erased, with generic neural signatures, in which deviations would be eliminated as noise, but singular experiences with their specific neural correlates. Of course the goal is to detect patterns, but it is only in a second stage, from the analysis of singular experiences that generic structures are searched for at the experiential and neural levels. (p. 4)

This parallel enables us to emphasize a fundamental point with regard to the necessity and usefulness of the status of the volume of being as a concept. According to the phenomenographic approach, to focus on neural processes is valuable and interesting but only along with other methods and perspectives, which will allow us not to fragment the continuity

of the volume anew by being interested only in one of its aspects. As the authors stress themselves, the elicitation interview in the context of neurophenomenology aims at detailing and deepening the structure of experience during a very short moment, namely “a given slice of time” (p. 4).

We could also draw similar remarks, for instance, concerning the relevance of ethnomethodology, especially when it provides us with important tools to detail observations and descriptions. However, this approach is not sufficient as it keeps the focus on the sequentiality of actions. Therefore, even if these kind of projects found in neurophenomenology or ethnomethodology can indeed inspire the phenomenographic project, one cannot forget that, from a methodological point of view, a phenomenographic observation should target both a continuous following—if not through all the possible situations, at least through a significant duration with a focus on several fragments of life—and an interest in all of the volume’s aspects that are graspable through different levels of description.

Focusing on an entire individual

This second part of our chapter consists of presenting empirical methods and research techniques in order to observe and describe a “volume of being”. This part is also divided into three sections. Firstly, we will compare phenomenography with some phenomenological approaches in anthropology in order to insist on the methodological radicality of the former. Secondly, we will provide methodological guidelines concerning, in particular, the possible ways of beginning a phenomenographic research by introducing the inquiry the first author undertook, which focuses on the rapper LK. Finally, we will enter into the details of an analysis that refers to a specific moment of this research with LK, called a “videophenomenography”, which will help us to highlight the usefulness of the phenomenographic approach.

Phenomenography as a radical approach in Anthropology

Before entering into a more concrete methodological discussion, we will first tackle the family resemblance one might see between phenomenography and recent “phenomenological approaches in anthropology” (Desjarlais and Throop, 2011) in order to specify the radicality of our approach and the posture phenomenographers should adopt towards their “fieldwork.” Those phenomenological approaches in anthropology indeed share very similar questions compared to the view we are defending, for instance with regard to their concerns about existence and its temporality, embodiment, consciousness, life as lived and more basically about “what it means to be human” (p. 88). However, we argue that, even if they undoubtedly offer fruitful and relevant insights with respect to human beings in anthropology, they are not yet radical enough when it comes to the observation of human individuals compared to other social sciences. Therefore, the tendency to bypass two crucial principles of phenomenography, namely the continued observation and detailed description of one individual at a time and the possibility to look below—by being interested in a “less-than”—and beyond—by looking for a “more-than”—social and cultural aspects of humanity, is significant.

In a sense, these approaches are still too culturally centered as the title of their method indicates, i.e. *ethnography*, despite their interest in existence. To put it differently, their research consists in giving a cultural flavor to phenomenological theories and in analyzing “cultural and experiential phenomena” (p. 89) *from the perspective of a certain group* at the expense of human individuals’ perspectives. As Desjarlais and Throop (2011) notice themselves, “anthropologists have tended to shy away from the more general, categorical, culture-free pronouncements often sounded by phenomenological philosophers, preferring instead to couch their findings within specific cultural and historical settings” (p. 92).

We insist on that point because according to our reading, phenomenology precisely provides tools that can help step back from this group perspectivism, and it may be that phenomenological approaches in anthropology have not yet embraced all the methodological

potentiality inspired from phenomenology. As we have seen with the “experiential self,” we might consider that every consciousness entails a pre-reflective aspect, which “is not concerned with issues like personality, character, preferences, and history” (Zahavi 2014, p. 23) and which is “a necessary precondition for any socially constructed self” (p. 11). From an empirical point of view, then, the possibility to not deny “a more minimalist experience-based notion of selfhood” (p. 11) highlights the problem of the commonly held idea in social sciences that the human is entirely social (or entirely surrounded by the social) and asks for detailed comparisons between individuals in order to analyze what determines exactly the part played by the so-called “social.”

In other words, it seems difficult to address the issues of continuity and singularity through an empirical manner, even in those kinds of phenomenological approaches, which still show more interest in the content and the “what” of particular phenomena, than in the “how” of existence. This is why phenomenography could be more likely the method of an “existential anthropology” in which the unities observed are concrete existences of human individuals. Empirically, a very important shift offered by phenomenography consists in avoiding the sole focus on highly effervescent and collective moments of life as rituals or events that jeopardize the quality of individuals’ details we are looking for.

One can notice that this shift, which would be especially suitable for grasping continuity, has not yet been adopted by the phenomenological anthropologists. Csordas (1990), for example, provides us with a very interesting paradigm for anthropology based on embodiment from a twofold development, which draws from, on the one side, perception according to Merleau-Ponty, and, on the other side, practice according to Bourdieu. However, the focus remains on “ritual behavior” or “ritual language” in order to study “ritual healing” situations in a characteristic context, namely the contemporary Christian religious movement, a level of typicality that unfortunately abandons the perspective of concrete individuals too soon.

Moreover, with regards to the issue of singularity, the phenomenological anthropologists who take embodiment seriously are often already committed to an approach according to which “the embodiedness of our Being-in-the-world is to discover a common ground where self and other are one” (Jackson 1983, p. 340). Putting that assumption associated with an always already “social and material environment” (p. 330), also called “an environment of practical activity” (p. 333), amounts to seeing every member of a certain group as interchangeable, contributing to realize certain kinds of social or institutional practice. To say that those practices are embodied, or embedded in real existences *in general* is of course important for social anthropology but it is not sufficient to grasp the first-personal character of concrete human individuals.

It is as if the methodological efforts from phenomenological anthropologists are aimed at a similar goal as us, namely to be more attentive to human nature and more conceptually accurate in order to better understand existence, compared to methods in traditional anthropology. However, we think that analysis could be pushed further, particularly by drawing inspiration from phenomenology. One good example can be found in the idea of “ethnographic epoché” provided by Throop (2010). What does epoché mean in phenomenology exactly? Zahavi (2003) explains it as follows:

Husserl’s epoché and reduction are methodological tools permitting us to gain a distance from the natural attitude, thereby making a philosophical reflection possible that allows us to analyze something which we are surrounded by, but which we seldom thematize, namely *givenness*. One encounters objects as given, but does not reflect upon what givenness means, nor how it is possible. (p. 9)

As we have seen, givenness in the phenomenological tradition refers above all to the very first-personal character of experiential life and should not be immediately understood as the content of the (cultural and social) object given or its specific content. So, saying that “one of the main

aims of anthropologists drawing from phenomenological methods has been to bracket the assumptions that come from their own cultural and theoretical heritages” (Desjarlais and Throop, 2011, pp. 88-89) amounts to recalling the main methodological principles taught in different fields advocating ethnography.

From the conceptualization of human beings as volumes, what phenomenographers have to bracket out is therefore not only their “cultural and theoretical heritages” but, in the first place, everything surrounding the individual observed, which is always in a minimal sense this individual and not that one, who is not *a priori* social. In that sense, the idea of epoché is useful for strongly drawing our attention towards what is barely noticed, seen, or even observed, namely the singularity and continuity of a human individual, suspending temporarily the more usual attention towards interactions and the environments in which the volume evolves. In a few words, a phenomenographic epoché would consist in trying to observe the volume as separated from its background at some points during the research.

Importantly, this does not mean that the phenomenographic approach is not compatible with embedded views of humans and that sociality does not exist at all. In a certain sense, we can formulate our view concerning the link between the volume and sociality in the same way Zahavi (2014) characterizes his position vis-à-vis the relationship between selfhood and intersubjectivity. About this relationship he says: “In short, I am not disputing the de facto coexistence of (minimal) selfhood and intersubjectivity, I am denying their constitutive interdependence” (p. 95). In sum, our wish to focus on *one* single entire individual *as long as possible* in all the different situations he or she is going through should be seen as the very particularity, and probably radicalism, of phenomenography.

Focusing on LK

In order to do justice to the entirety of the volume of being, we have to observe the human individual as being-in-time. *Ideally*, the exercise that should be undertaken by the

phenomenographer is to consider this individual from birth and then from day to day. However, following an individual everywhere during his entire life is, of course, an ideal of exhaustiveness that no one could really and fully reach. Nevertheless, this ideal has to remain as a horizon of possibility towards which a phenomenographer should try to aim by being inventive regarding the possible devices of observation and description we can imagine and use. Thus, we would suggest that it is crucial to test this kind of following, and for heuristic reasons, to begin with some fragments of a whole life constitutes undoubtedly a good starting point. It is in this regard, for instance, that the second author agreed to be filmed during twelve continuous hours (Piette 2017a).

One might notice that this type of method bears a strong resemblance to the method called “shadowing” whereby the “researcher follows a person as his or her shadow, walking in his or her footsteps over a relatively long period of time, throughout his or her different activities, to collect detailed-grained data” (Meunier and Vasquez 2008, 168). This method is for example currently practiced in organizational studies, as indicated in the book by Czarniawska (2007), a management studies specialist. However, it remains marginalized in the social sciences, especially if the shadowing takes place outside of professional or public spaces, entering into individuals’ private, domestic spheres, or if the shadowing is done with a camera. We are altogether in favor of this kind of methodological inspiration as long as it is used along with other manners of focusing on the different aspects of the human individual, by changing the perspectives. Therefore, we prefer another qualification than “shadowing”, namely the general methodological orientation proper to phenomenography: *focusing* on a human individual considered as a volume of being. On our view, the idea of focusing has the advantage of allowing us to integrate within the same research process both a “following part,” with the observation from a third-person perspective, and an “analyzing part,” which is particularly attentive to the first-person perspective.

Such a focus, according to the phenomenographic approach, aims ultimately to understand the volume of being *for itself* and not to highlight a special aspect discovered during the research process. For instance, the focusing on LK, as long as he is a rapper, can help one to study musical activity or the creation process. However, although the music and creation are indeed part of LK's experience, the bet is here to focus on LK *for himself*, namely by including higher typifications only when this is relevant *for him*.

If we wish to undertake the phenomenographic program, the observation process has to continue with a focus on humans, their actions, gestures, states of consciousness, and each individual has to be taken separately and tracked from situation to situation. Thus, the first step, which could also constitute the first obstacle to overcome, is to find a person who will agree to take part in a long, and often invasive inquiry. To examine how this kind of collaboration can be built concretely, we will now discuss a specific study, and introduce the collaboration between LK and the first author. In this case, the trustful link was established progressively, meaning that the collaboration did not begin with a strict question that would have required the immediate commitment to participate in a demanding inquiry over several years. At the very beginning of the research, LK was what we could call a "privileged informer" encountered during an ethnographic observation of a Hip Hop event in Switzerland. The first author had previously completed a Master's thesis (Kneubühler 2011) based on a corpus of rap songs and one of the ones analyzed was written and rapped by LK.

This pre-knowledge about LK through his music was the first subject of conversation between both, which led LK to feel particularly interested in the first author's work, and he subsequently asked to read her analysis of his song. Several months after this, LK was really enthusiastic, concerned and expressed a strong wish to deepen his understanding of his own writing practice. He even offered spontaneously to send her different materials, such as CDs or texts, to introduce her to other rappers, and made himself available for potential interviews.

From there and progressively throughout different exchanges, LK revealed himself to be a very reflexive person, worried about his presence in the world and about existence more generally, showing a particularly developed (self-)reflection. This becomes an element that is important to take into account when we wish to follow an individual more closely.

Indeed, such reflexivity is very helpful to trigger self-observation without the presence of the phenomenographer, by asking people to take notes by themselves, describing their acts, feelings, and explaining how they are affected by what happens. Thus, according to the phenomenographic approach, it is also possible for the persons to record themselves in various formats or to ask them for already existing traces of *autography*, namely writings about themselves, such as notes or diaries. In this respect, the rap music genre practiced by LK and by the members of his Hip Hop collective is interestingly a particular form of writing about oneself, which is thought of and lived firstly as a practice dedicated to oneself: according to his words, as another kind of “therapy.”

As LK repeatedly claims during interviews or discussions, “I rap (or I write) because I need it.” This is also something almost ubiquitous in his lyrics, which are mostly about his practice of writing itself or about his interiority, his ordinary life, his weaknesses, turmoils and sufferings. For example, he chants: “It was quiet when I was young but now I’m no longer within life anymore, that’s why I’m clinging to writing until there is no more ink, it doesn’t cure quickly but rap music, this is my therapy”³. In other words, according to LK, to write rap songs is *above all* lived neither as a cultural practice nor as a professional or economic activity but rather as a means to understand oneself better in order to feel better. Of course, he is doing

³ Translated from French where standard grammar is not entirely respected either: “C’était tranquille étant p’tit mais là la vie j’suis plus d’dans voilà pourquoi j’m’accroche à l’écriture jusqu’à c’qu’y ait plus d’encre ça soigne pas rapidement mais c’est ma thérapie l’son” (LK, Sur Cahier, Track 6, Vendredi 13, Typik Sounds, 2010). It is noteworthy that the therapeutic dimension of this type of writing is also a relevant element outlined in the methodology called “Autoethnography,” which is entirely based on the experience of the researcher and whose research is written using the first personal pronoun “I.” As Ellis (2004) puts it, “Good autoethnographic writing is truthful, vulnerable, evocative, and therapeutic.” (p. 135)

so through a specific medium, but in case he would stop rapping, he would then find another way of writing about himself. This reflexivity related to his “therapeutic creativity” is something predominant in his life, and also regarding his job.

LK is in his thirties and has a high school diploma in Art. He is currently a teacher for children in that domain. Even though no observation or following took place within this context, we know that creativity, and more particularly now, the need to generate creativity in his pupils is a *continuous concern* for him. This is an interesting point with regard to the fact that Hip Hop is commonly defined as a lifestyle and a spirit that affects an entire life, and not only as a determined set of practices like rapping, breakdancing or doing graffiti art. This is precisely what the following Hip Hop motto means: *Rap is something you do, Hip Hop is something you live*. This entirety, which enables LK to make sense of his experience (and not only his *experience of creation*), constitutes the reason why he has chosen this means of expression in early adulthood, despite the fact that he has not been socialized within that specific milieu.

Videophenomenography

For all these reasons, LK is definitely an ideal person to work with when one is interested in unfolding a phenomenographic approach. LK’s particularly high degree of reflexivity and wish to better understand his life and the world significantly facilitated the exploration of different types of devices aimed to describe and analyze his experience, including, for instance, discussions based on transcriptions of his texts with elicitations of past moments of writing. One of the particularly interesting devices attempted was the realization of a “videophenomenography” (Kneubühler, 2017), in which LK agreed to film himself, alone, during a moment of creation. This videophenomenography has required three different steps from LK’s point of view. The first step corresponds to a “set-up interview” between LK and the researcher where the different possibilities to film a writing moment were discussed. Given

that LK needs inspiration to write and as it was difficult to plan a meeting, both parties decided that LK would film himself the next time he felt the desire to write.

The second step refers to the actual filming of the video by LK, a video that lasted around one hour during which he composed a verse intended to be rapped in a collective song entitled “Scared of Me.”⁴ The framework of the filmed situation is especially worthwhile to describe, given its stability and the simplicity of what is going on. It comprises no interaction and solely a singular person, sitting on a red couch in the middle of a dark room, his head above an unwritten page (see Figure 1.1⁵), while the instrumental’s beat resonates repeatedly from the computer that was used as a camera. Furthermore, LK is speechless except when he tries to chant the words he had written. For these reasons, the video device itself favors the bracketing, the temporary suspension of the a priori social nature of the situation and helps us stand out from group perspectivism by focusing more clearly on the first-person perspective of the person filmed. Given that the data at hand focused exclusively on a moving volume, the first author undertook to describe every movement and gesture of LK, one by one, to see more deeply what a phenomenographic approach could teach us regarding embodiment issues.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.1 HERE]

Figure 1.1. Basic posture of LK during the creation.

Finally, the last step consisted of an elicitation interview conducted by the first author, an interview during which LK was asked to comment and detail his lived experience of the moment documented by the video. As we will see, this work of elicitation is distinctly helpful to determine what belongs to a pre-reflective dimension, in particular regarding what a spectator can see that LK did not notice himself or was unaware of during the creation.

⁴ Translated from the title in French *Peur de moi*.

⁵ About the figures displayed in this section: they all are screenshots taken from the video realized by LK with a cheap program on his computer. To read the figures correctly, the reader has to remember that the images are reversed, i.e. the right side are in fact the left one and vice versa.

Before entering more deeply in the description and analysis of the video, let us specify some elements about the use of the camera – which can also be convenient to the use of photographs – for the phenomenographic approach more generally. The special use of the camera is a privileged means to overcome significant practical difficulties the phenomenographer faces when trying to maintain a focus on one person through different kinds of situations while wishing to reach a great level of detail. Such a focus is indeed a challenge since, on the one hand, as ethnomethodology has shown well, we ordinary and naturally see groups or categories and, on the other hand, one of the main characteristics of human attention and presence is to be able to switch in the “minor mode of reality” (Piette, 2015b).

The latter is conceived as a mode of engagement that corresponds to the capacity of oscillating from full commitment in a (collective) activity to a detached posture, the mind wandering towards various thoughts completely irrelevant with regard to the situation without jeopardizing one’s own ordinary activities, even without being fully aware to be distant in one’s own presence. On the phenomenographer’s side, this points to the need for getting trained to maintain an “unnatural” focus, especially during manuscript note taking and especially in situations that involve several individuals. Therefore, recording the observations makes the focus possible in a manner whereby, for each viewing, we might draw the attention on new or unexpected elements, which are almost ungraspable when we are committed in a situation. It is also crucial to be attentive to those subtle switches of engagement by describing meticulously the presence and postures of the person observed and by finding a way to look at the degree of awareness those switches imply.

To repeat, the video device is particularly useful for these purposes, including considering the relevance of the camera, and therefore of the inquiry for the person filmed within the situation. In this respect, once the video taping device is used, it is fundamental to integrate the presence of the camera as any other elements present and relevant for the

individual filmed within the description and analysis. As Mondada (2009) puts it, “video taping itself are embedded within the organization of the ongoing action, and has to be integrated within its analysis and not kept separated – In a methodological appendix or in the ‘backstage’ areas of science” (p. 61). This is to say that we need to consider the use of the video as neither “marginal”—i.e. as a specific way of collecting data—nor “problematic”—i.e. as an insurmountable bias.

Hence regarding LK’s videophenomenography, in which he had to combine two different goals—namely writing a verse and recording himself for an inquiry—, it has been possible to demonstrate “moment-by-moment” when LK was oriented towards the research and when he was instead fully committed to the creation (or to neither of them). Over one hour, there had been in fact very little attention to the camera or explicit action directed towards the research. The latter was obviously the major focal point when he switched the camera on and settled into the situation, as one can read in the first lines of the description:

When the camera powers up, LK is standing in forward near the computer used to film himself and which is laid on the bar present in the room, next to a coffee table and a red couch. The instrumental’s beat sounds already around. LK looks for a sheet of paper into his backpack which is off-camera during a couple of seconds. He takes a sheet of paper, puts it on the coffee table and looks for his pencil case into his backpack again. With his pencil case in his hands, he moves sideways until the red couch by keeping his gaze towards the camera. He directs then his gaze towards his pencil case, looking for a pen while sitting exactly in the middle, but at the edge, of the red couch, the upper body in forward above the coffee table. He clears his throat. With his left hand, he takes a black pen and puts the pencil case on the table. Then very quickly, with his right hand, he drinks a sip of tea in the glass which is just above the pencil case. He puts the glass back on the

coffee table quickly and sharply, gives the pen to his right hand, clicks on it and immediately puts this hand with the pen up the sheet.

After that, during the first fifteen minutes, only three quick looks at the video device were observed: two while he was writing, and one when he was already detached from the creation, rolling a cigarette (see Figure 1.2). Moreover, the latter corresponds to the only long moment where he was altogether doing and thinking about something else.

[INSERT SCREENSHOT 1.2 HERE]

Figure 1.2. Quick look to the camera while LK is rolling a cigarette.

During the elicitation interview, LK said that those glimpses to the camera happened when he was briefly worried about the machine's standby mode. At the beginning, it was not enough to interrupt himself until he finally stood up to change settings on the computer in order to be sure he would avoid the standby mode. After that adjustment, we can say that he was, for the remaining forty-five minutes, fully involved in his creation, the inquiry being in the minor mode regarding the writing and chanting, even though of course lighter switches happened to take a sip of tea or water, to smoke on his cigarette or to stare at the floor during the creation.

During those moments of full commitment, the first author also noticed twice very furtive gestures that indicate the temporary forgetfulness of the research, as one can observe in the following excerpt that happened while he was testing his text:

He restarts the same previous cadence but accentuates the width of his movements during a few seconds. Then, he whispers his text again, throws his right hand on his right side, a hand that is doing furtive and quick back and forth in the air. Following the continuity of this gesture, he adjusts his pants at the crotch with his left hand, returns to flat back and finally leans his elbows on his thighs.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.3 HERE]

Figure 1.3. “He adjusts his pants at the crotch”

What has been described as he “adjusts his pants at the crotch” (see Figure 1.3) refers to a gesture that has a very private nature and demonstrates LK’s involvement in his writing at some points without thinking about the public account of the video afterwards. He blushed a little when he discovered those gestures during the elicitation interview, even laughed slightly, but neither the first author, nor LK felt comfortable to talk explicitly about it. Those elements could be seen as a kind of “leftover” that would have been thrown away in other circumstances, but in the present perspective can allow us to learn more about the engagement of someone in a situation.

Thus, a phenomenographic description aims not to immediately eliminate secondary, peripheral or non-relevant elements. In this way, it endeavors to identify as many details as possible, particularly links between the elements observed and all their shades with closer perspectives and more detailed focus on particular moments. What is sought is a balance between closer or more distant perspectives in order to catch a style of existence, and to grasp what remains the same in specific ways of existing, by being particularly attentive to specific ways of moving or to what really counts for the person followed. This is surely not an easy task. Concerning LK, what seems continuous are, as we will see, his anxiety, his feeling of vulnerability in the world, his nervousness, and his way of being concerned about his existence and actions.

Those elements became relevant during the research process, and started to appear as recurring ways of expressing himself, of answering questions, or of dealing with everyday life. They have continued to be salient through both a reflective, narrative level, and a pre-reflective level. This is shown at a narrative and conscious level in the sense that, for instance, he very often wanted to talk about the traces of himself he is letting via his songs in the world. He insisted a lot about his fear concerning what people might do with his texts, about what would

be the consequences of a false interpretation, knowing that he paradoxically lived creation as an absolute requirement to move forward. For example, even though it was not the topic of the “set-up interview,” that paradox was a strong theme discussed, LK saying to the first author: “It’s a good thing you’re trying to understand that. I’m often anxious about this idea of traces which will no longer belong to me.”

Interestingly, this anxious dimension was also observable through the way he was experiencing the creation in the video—a specific way marked by physical contractions and sudden movements, which signals a certain nervousness. The physical contractions are especially visible during moments of heavy concentration, which are reflected in his frowning, pursed lips, tensed face or clenched fists (see Figure 1.4). More frequently, his nervousness is palpable through the way he suddenly moves from his basic posture to achieve a specific gesture (e.g. when he takes the glass of tea or starts flailing his hand in the air) or through the fastness of the transitions between two different movements (e.g. smoking and, then, taking his pen), transitions that have been qualified with adverbs such as “sharply,” “abruptly” or “precipitously.” LK himself had noticed those indications of nervousness during the elicitation interview. At some point, he even said, “That so true, I’m someone stressed by life [*je suis un stressé de la vie*]” by referring to remarks frequently made by his friends. This way of experiencing the creation was found this time in a non-linguistic and pre-reflective level, in the sense that anxiety was never an object of thought during the process of creation but was nevertheless *his* way of living it, a way visible on his volume (and therefore observed by both the phenomenographer and himself), giving us interesting insights with regard to the relationship between consciousness and the body.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.4 HERE]

Figure 1.4. One example of physical contractions : “he clenches both fists”

Given that LK was not talking to someone else in the video, the level of description was then precisely oriented towards his volume in the sense that it was necessary to find a way to describe the silent dimension of his behavior and movements. Thus, the first author draws inspiration from the analysis of Merleau-Ponty (1964) in *Signs* when he aims to understand how Matisse, from a recorded slow-motion video of his painting in the making, reached “*this painting which did not yet exist*” (p. 46) via his movements. From this phenomenological perspective, there is no need to keep separated the *spoken* language, on the one side, and the movement, on the other side, as long as the body expresses a *speaking* language, which is silent, and which is always intertwined with speech and thought.

Such an understanding of language and body is interestingly compatible with the idea of volume of being, which entails, as we saw, different aspects that inevitably belongs to the same person, and that are necessarily interconnected. By analyzing the act of painting, Merleau-Ponty (1964) underlined the necessity to “consider speech before it is spoken, the background of silence which does not cease to surround it and without which it would say nothing” (p. 46). Therefore, the focus on the description of LK’s movements and gestures was particularly valuable to see what would appear if we wanted to grasp how LK, through his volume, reached *this text for a song which did not yet exist* when the camera started its capture.

We already gave an overview of various modes of engagement of LK during the creation of the verse, LK who is clearly not always completely focused on this specific project. However, what happens when he is fully involved? Interestingly, he is never completely static. The following excerpt, which takes place in the middle of the video when the text begins to get a definite shape, is particularly significant in that respect:

He raises and redirects the head and his upper body promptly but slightly while reading what he has written during four seconds by swinging distinctly. Through the continuity of these sways, he returns to flat back, starting a new scansion with a strong and clear

voice: *Yeah Scared of my-self//so little hope to be, The one who will save me half responsible if I don't reach the bank, I am my own traitor/, my spitting portrait// My own monster, a human bomb with a broken timer, On the menu, sweat, phobia//nightmares and heart issues/We open up only during the autopsy, anaesthetized by all those glasses of rum.* He starts by being very active: he begins by quickly flailing his right hand in the air. Subsequently, he throws both arms in front of him before leaning his elbows on his thighs anew. From this position, he mimes the musical measure in a marked way with his right hand by stressing certain words: he points his temple with the index finger and the middle finger on *half* just before redirecting the sheet on the coffee table with his left hand, then on *spitting portrait*, he throws this hand sharply towards the table with the index finger pointed. Afterwards, he stops beating the rhythm with his hand and stays leaning on the thighs by swinging from left to right. He raises his upper body once more on *broken timer* while sketching several movements with his right hand, which he finally places on his other hand. By saying *On the menu*, he points the text with his right index finger until *nightmares* when starting to shake his hand in the air quickly before returning on his thighs. He is now centered, slightly above the table; the right hand's fingers faintly placed on the sheet, staring at the words on the page, the head nodding on the rhythm.

In this dense but short passage of twenty seconds, what can one observe? First of all, there are no elements that interfere with his expression. At every second, his entire being is taken in a gesticulation that expresses itself. More specifically, when we focus on the middle of the excerpt, while he is chanting his text, his volume becomes really expressive and moves as if he were on stage in front of a virtual audience, flailing his arms and his bust, marking the text by pointing it (see Figure 1.5) and, also here, by throwing his arms in the air. In other sequences that refer to different parts of the scansion, similar observations were made with multiple ways

of gesticulating. For instance, by saying “the problem is thickening,” he actually opens his arms (see Figure 1.6). When we instead focus on the beginning and the end of the sequence, we can notice that while he is reading what he has written, he nods or swings from left to right, following the rhythm of the beat around, as if he were listening to himself.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.5 HERE]

Figure 1.5. “[H]e throws [the right] hand sharply towards the table with the index finger pointed”

[INSERT FIGURE 1.6 HERE]

Figure 1.6. LK opens his arms on *the problem is thickening*.

Surprisingly, the first kind of gesticulation not only is his way of performing his rap in this particular creative situation but also refers to his way of really performing on stage, an embodied relationship to the music that is also shared by the member of his Hip Hop collective⁶. The second kind of gesticulation is similarly shared but by the Hip Hop fans or listeners during concerts. Two important points have to be outlined here. The first point is that these gesticulations demonstrate an incorporation that makes others appear in a solitary activity, literally, within LK’s moving volume. The second point is that both kinds of movement were not accomplished consciously by LK, since he realized how much he was moving only when he was watching himself during the elicitation. He even said with a tone of astonishment: “I really look like an autistic guy moving alone like that.”

In sum, we are presented with two kinds of pre-reflective embodiment of a form of proto-communication, which can thicken the presupposed minimal pre-reflective and pre-linguistic level of self-consciousness by adding to it the pre-reflective presence of others that

⁶ One can find comparisons based on several screenshots of LK and other members of his collective taken in different public situation in Kneubühler (2017).

appear through an expressive volume. We can even detail further this pre-reflective presence of others, supported by the two different kinds of gesticulations. On the one hand, we can detail a very basic “social presence,” which refers to a kind of embodied sociality that we can observe through shared ways of moving and expressing oneself in the music, ways that *pre-figure* listeners—others who do not yet exist—on the continuity of one’s own movements. This embodied sociality reminds us of the pre-predicative aspect of our connection with other humans, which could enable all other kinds of communication that has been described by Merleau-Ponty (2012) when he says:

We must return to the social world with which we are in contact through the simple fact of our existence, and that we inseparably bear along with us prior to every objectification. [...] Prior to this coming to awareness, the social exists silently and as a solicitation. (p. 379)

On the other hand, we are getting closer to a kind of objectification when LK is adopting the attitude of the listener while reading his own text, taking a pre-reflective public standpoint on himself, which anticipates the reception of his lyrics. When he is reading his written text for himself, *in his head* so to speak, he is listening to how the text could sound and becomes, in a way, his first public. This embodied anticipation of a public tends to lead us towards the descriptions of the creation by Dewey (1934) according to a more intellectualistic fashion. As he puts it in *Art as experience*:

The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that *its* qualities *as perceived* have controlled the question of production. The act of producing that is directed by intent to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have. The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works. (p. 48)

This public's embodiment is closely related to the conscious anticipation LK is able to live through the creation by truly thinking about the reception at some points when he is composing his rap. As he described it, his first concern is focused on the consistency of his lyrics according to what he is currently feeling, in order to "cure himself," and according to a subtle balance between meanings and sonority.

Nevertheless, he sometimes also thinks directly about his text in terms of what he wishes to communicate to imagined and non-determined others and thus anticipates the consequences of his rap by being anxious of future receptions – an anxiety which reminds us of his concerns regarding the traces he will leave in the world. To put it differently, we are once more facing LK's style of existing from another point of view, which is interestingly related this time to something shared within his own volume.

Conclusion: following a human being in order to see human beings

Central to the temporal and embodied structure of human experience is the existential fact that we are emplaced in a world that always outstrips the expanse of our being. As beings, [...] we are never able to exhaust our experience of the world in which we are emplaced because there is always something more yet to come, a side yet to see, an aspect, quality, action, or interaction yet to experience. An ever-shifting horizon to our experience suggests a beyond from which we have come and a toward to which we could be headed. A more-than is always woven into the fabric of existence that constantly shifts as we attend to particular aspects of reality, while ignoring others. Uncertainty, ambiguity, and indeterminacy are the norm here. (Desjarlais and Throop (2011, p. 90)

This quotation, which comes from the presentation of what phenomenological approaches in anthropology are, will be relevant to consider in order to synthesize our view, particularly regarding this very idea of a "more-than" of being and existence.

Once more, we can notice similar concerns compared to the phenomenographic approach defended here, concerns mostly related to the continuity of existence that justifies, in our view, the focus on one individual at a time. However, we argue that there is undoubtedly a *more than* the “more-than” of this kind of phenomenological approaches in anthropology, a *more than* that founds the radicalism of phenomenography. Firstly, this continuity has to be effectively grasped through concrete observations. Secondly, based on the notion of the volume of being and the focus on LK, there is not only an “ever-shifting horizon” in existence but also styles of existence that run across its different aspects, which point to what remains the same throughout the turmoil of life, that affects real humans.

The detailed description based on one single volume stresses how much all those aspects are interconnected and how they can, hopefully, show the heuristic value of phenomenography, namely of focusing on one individual over a long time insofar as we are now able to detail different levels of (pre)reflectivity, which belong to the volume of being, and different ways of defining the threshold of sociality at the core of a human’s life. Indeed, what the videophenomenography of LK shows is that there is always something *more than* a specific level of consciousness or *more than* a specific aspect of being LK: there is his style of existing, there is his concerns, there his pervasive relationship to others, there is sometimes others present in thoughts, there is even more abstract levels that we have not treated in the scope of this chapter regarding his conception of citizenship for instance. Importantly, this also means, if we consider the idea of the volume of being seriously, that there is always something *less than* every of these different aspects and levels, such as inward-looking attitudes or the presupposed minimal fact that only LK experientially and pre-reflectively knows how it is to be LK. Moreover, it may not be impossible that this *less than* would reveals itself as more fundamental and more constitutive for the volume of being than all the aspects we can always add to it.

Thus, not everything in “the temporal and embodied structure of human experience” is indeterminate, uncertain and ambiguous, depending on what level or what aspect of experience we are focusing, especially with regard to the singularity of everyone. This is why it is so important to the phenomenographic approach to always tie together simultaneity and succession, singularity and continuity, and not to dissolve always already what is observed in higher degree of typicality. The concept of volume of being has been precisely provided to help researchers to not toggle into the study of various phenomena, which leads us to leave the human too quickly. LK constitutes an illustration of one possible attempt to keep this kind of focus, but phenomenography obviously needs other studies to fill the concept of volume of being. The focus we are asking for carries arguably serious obstacles to overcome. Nevertheless, to conclude, we will say that beyond all these potential difficulties, the success of phenomenography will be already reached when the following of human beings will genuinely, literally reveal human beings for themselves in our descriptions and analysis.

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