

# Ethnography or non-ethnography: Epistemology of a fundamental difference

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## Abstract

Anthropology and ethnography are inseparable in the history of the social sciences, with one claiming the other as its methodological characteristic, which is nonetheless very much in evidence in many other disciplines. This pairing directs anthropology towards the study of cultures, groups, interactions, situations and events. With such primacy given to social relations, the difference between sociology and anthropology is greatly blurred. What would anthropology be if it were no longer social and cultural? It could discard its 'double' and look for other methods, to change its subject matter, and to take an interest in the singularity of each being. This is the proposal of this article. If this happened, then anthropology would be radically different from sociology.

## Keywords

ethnography, individuality, existential anthropology, sociological theory, observation, existence, anthropological theory, methodology

*To detach* is the essential gesture of classical art. The painter 'detaches' a feature, a shadow, if need be enlarges it, reverses it, and makes it into a work; and even though the work is consistent, insignificant, or natural (one of Duchamp's objects, a monochrome surface), since it always extends, whether one likes it or not, beyond a physical context (a wall, a street), it is fatally hallowed as a work. In this, art is the contrary of the sociological, philological, political sciences, which keep *integrating* what they have distinguished (they distinguish it only to integrate it the more completely). (Barthes, 1977: 68)

## Introduction

Social anthropology and ethnography are inseparable in the history of the social sciences, with one claiming the other as its methodological characteristic, despite the fact that ethnography is present in many other disciplines such as sociology and

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political science. This pairing directs anthropology towards the study of cultures, groups, social relations, situations and events, all of which are themes of the other social sciences.

The following question arises: How can anthropology, which would then no longer be social and cultural, be separated from its 'double'? My answer is through non-ethnography, which means learning to look at each human being, to find the most accurate ways of describing each one in their continuity, without losing them by adding contexts, such as historical eras and other people. Clarifying non-ethnography is a way of better understanding sociologies and social anthropologies: it is an important issue for the social sciences in general. I will not hesitate here to try to develop a new lexicon around issues of the volume of being: *volumography* and *volumology*.

### **Ethnography: putting together, inserting, adding**

'First of all', writes Malinowski, 'it has to be laid down that we have to study here stereotyped manners of thinking and feeling. As sociologists, we are not interested in what A or B may feel *qua* individuals, in the accidental course of their own personal experiences – we are interested only in what they feel and think *qua* members of a given community' (Malinowski, 1922: 23). He wrote here 'as sociologists', it is worth emphasising. Mauss adds the danger of 'superficial observation' (Mauss, 2007: 8), calling for the observation 'of a tribe', an observation that 'should be as complete and as thorough as possible, omitting nothing' (Mauss, 2007: 11). The aim of the exhaustive monograph is, in Mauss's words, to reproduce 'the native life' (Mauss, 2007: 17).

Ingold (2014) is right to denounce this dimension of ethnography as cultural information, a kind of objectification or documentation of social life. Ethnography has not been that way for a long time; there is participation, reflexivity, and the search for more or less original ways of understanding and writing down experiences – both those of people studied and those of the ethnographer. This

was one of the challenges posed by Jeanne Favret-Saada's (2010: 27–28) criticism of Malinowski's ethnographic model in the 1970s:

Ethnography, as the science of cultural difference, has legitimately constituted its research procedures and criteria of validity around the notion of objectivity. It is by talking of the native as an object, as someone 'other' and by referring to him as a 'stating subject' ('he' has this practice or says this or that) that we reach the possibility of a discourse on a different culture, on an object which is not me [...]. Another particularity of ethnographic writing is that the native, the 'he' who is so freely predicted, never seems to have engaged in his own person in any speaking process. Scientific works do not refer to the original speech situation except to illustrate a point and to explain a native statement by referring it back to the speaker's social position: 'he talks in this way', we are warned, 'because he is a warrior', an 'aristocrat' or a 'shaman'. The remarks he once made to the ethnographer had no aim other than to represent the interests of his faction.

But I too am dissatisfied with the proposal to value a new play of enunciation that would incorporate the reality of the enunciators. It is no longer cultural difference that is being targeted, but, rather, beings interacting, connecting, corresponding (as Ingold would say) with each other and/or with the observer present, speaking and performing with them. This perspective is still an ethnography of social life.

In the sociological tradition of the Chicago School, analogous statements can be found in a variety of forms. Blumer (1969: 73) writes:

On the methodological or research side the study of action would have to be made from the position of the actor. Since action is forged by the actor out of what he perceives, interprets, and judges, one would have to see the operating situation as the actor sees it, perceive objects as the actor perceives them, ascertain their meaning in terms of the meaning they have for the actor, and follow the actor's line of conduct as the actor organizes

it – in short, one would have to take the role of the actor and see his world from his standpoint.

‘What is ethnography’, writes Michael Jackson, ‘if it is not an experiment in working out ways in which we can relate to others whose situations, worldviews, and life strategies are very different from our own?’ (Jackson, 2013: 21).

The intersubjectivist dimension, bringing inner experiences together, is more expected here than in interactionism proper, which is not inclined towards the analysis of lifeworlds. Moreover, during the ethnographic work itself, the idea that knowledge reflects the changing relationship that researchers have with people may indeed be valued. Michael Jackson (2018: 323) claims, for example, Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle and invokes Devereux (1967) on this subject:

George Devereux has shown that one’s personality inevitably colours the character of one’s observations and that the ‘royal road to an authentic, rather than fictitious, objectivity’ is perforce the way of informed subjectivity (Devereux, 1967: xvi–xvii). But subjectivity is social and somatic in character, and not necessary a synonym for solipsism or self-centredness.

Relations are at the heart of the proposed method, and are presented as such: fieldwork with people, more or less active participation, the interplay of affects. Devereux (1967) adds to this list the anthropologist’s defence and counter-transference mechanisms in the face of the difficulties inherent in observation.

### **Non-ethnography: extracting**

In fact, being a relationalist means adding ‘others’ (including the researcher) in various ways to the observation itself and to the description. The question then is: what is non-ethnography? Non-ethnography disassociates itself, on the one hand, from the ethnographic focus on cultures, relations and interactions as abstract wholes constructed by the researcher – social relations, various exchanges, and activities between humans – and, on the other hand, from the

theorisation of the individual as a relational entity engaged in an action. Non-ethnography focuses on the individual in successive situations, as a singular entity. This means overturning the ‘myth’ of participant observation and adopting a certain objectivist distance: the researcher does not necessarily enter a relationship with the ‘observed’.

More than any other method, even though it claims proximity to experience and the ambition of exhaustiveness, ethnography takes a rather extended view and constitutes an operation of uncontrolled loss of data, from the phase of observation to that of writing, with a particularly regrettable selection of many of the notes. Thus, while remaining faithful to its principles of proximity and exhaustiveness, it could advantageously be transformed into such radical exercises as naked-eye observation of existence – filmed or photographed – in the strongest sense of the term, as a continuous experience of moments and situations. In non-ethnography, one individual, one at a time, one existence, one at a time, constitutes the choice of analysis to be maintained throughout all the stages of the research, from notetaking to the final text, with nothing added that might dilute this objective, such as contexts, other humans, and social institutions. I perceive here a fundamental difference: the ethnographer looks horizontally to the left and to the right; but the non-ethnographer is seized by the being in front of them, which they look at from top to bottom, remaining outside the activities of the being in question.

Virginia Woolf (1985: 64–65) poses a major challenge to writers – and even more so ethnographers:

If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills – then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be

here, of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive. I could spend hours trying to write that as it should be written, in order to give the feeling which is even at this moment very strong in me. But I should fail (unless I had some wonderful luck); I dare say I should only succeed in having the luck if I had begun by describing Virginia herself. Here I come to one of the memoir writer's difficulties – one of the reasons why, though I read so many, so many are failures. They leave out the person to whom things happened. The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being. So they say: 'This is what happened'; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened. And the events mean very little unless we know first to whom they happened. Who was I then?

Non-ethnography is precisely the methodological response to avoid what Virginia Woolf highlighted: the priority of the event over being.

I have investigated terms that had become synonymous for me, to replace ethnography and gradually clarify non-ethnography. The first term was *phenomenography*. Marton (1981) also uses the term to study the conceptions from which individuals understand a given phenomenon. In this case, based mainly on semi-structured interviews, *phenomenography* considers the ways in which people conceptualise or experience the world, and its methodology has been formalised in the field of pedagogy. In this case, *phenomenography* specifically seeks variations in individual conceptions of learning.

For me, *phenomenography* involves a detailed observation of beings, with the aim of identifying the singularity of each person, including their inner intensity. Would *phenomenography* be the empirical methodology of phenomenology, the latter looking for 'essences' and the former for concrete singularities? However, an ambiguity remains. As a method of the phenomenon of 'being', *phenomenography* resists considering the relational stakes that carry the beings 'towards' others, and it prefers to look at being in itself. In this regard, it is different from much of phenomenology, which is often concerned, at some point in its reasoning,

with beings open, ahead of themselves, towards other humans, or objects, or gods, or whatever else, in different situations. Relations are predominant, radical singularity in its continuity is lost.<sup>1</sup> This tendency is present in phenomenological expressions of the social sciences, in which the intersubjectivities and the relations to the social context are essential. This can be seen, for example, in the work of C. Jason Throop (2010: 2) (which does not use the word *phenomenography*): 'Situating subjective experiences of pain in light of local systems of knowledge, morality, and practice, I investigate the ways pain can be transformed into locally valued forms of moral experience within the context of particular individuals' culturally constituted lifeworlds'.

Rapport (2018: 111) uses the term *alterography*, which refers to a subjective understanding with a view to experiencing 'the other':

*Alterography* is the aspiration to write of and from a different perspective: a different me. [...] Indeed, alterography is even to write of a non-customary, unhomey, version of myself: the person I would be were I to believe in God, or to be female, or to have been born in Nazi Germany. All of these concern the perspective of another human being, another individual embodiment: My anthropology is to inscribe such otherness, to write of and from this unhomey perspective.

He adds:

This is a subjective undertaking also because my evidence does not exceed my own experience. I possess my particular bodily perspective on the world, but I possess nothing else with the same knowledge or certainty. [...] I would experience otherness, but I have no objective vantage point, no objective means ultimately to exceed my own self. (Rapport, 2018: 111–112)

In this case, imagination is the 'key' to understanding the 'inside' of the other person. In reality, Nigel Rapport is interested in analysing a form of difference, of otherness – in relation to himself: Why is this or that individual doing this or that?

This requires him to make non-minimal use of the contexts and beings that surround each of us, in order to describe or analyse the actions he identifies. Ethnography is not so far away.

As a non-ethnographer, I also do not want to add others to the central figure to be looked at – the other or others of everyone. In the same way, I prefer not to associate the word ‘other’, which connotes either exoticism or particular empathy, with the individual, the volume of being (as I call it) that I would have to follow, watch, film, and describe (Piette, 2019, 2023). Each volume of being could potentially be followed, according to a defined protocol, without adding the mystery of the other and the relations with the observer.

The term *anthropography* might be appropriate here. In 1570, John Dee – a specialist in Euclidean geometry, mathematician, astronomer, geographer and also something of a mystic – associated anthropography with the description of the numbers, measurements, and colours of each element contained in the human body. A transdisciplinary project, anthropography in the Renaissance period was intended to be a ‘cartography’, with a view to understanding humans in an increasingly complex way (Del Sapio Garbero, 2010). The term ‘anthropography’ was mainly reserved for the study of human physical and anatomical characteristics.

One might ask what an anthropographer would do today. First, according to my reasoning, they could observe a human being as *a volume of being*. The methodological starting point would be this numerical unit, which would be followed in the course of its actions, in order to identify in detail how it manifests, both at a given moment and in continuity through time.

As I became increasingly oriented towards this focus on the singularity of each being, and as the notion of the ‘volume of being’ became increasingly prevalent in my work, I almost naturally preferred the term *volumography*, which expresses the study of being in its volume and consistency. It indicates, specifies, and pinpoints what is being aimed at: a being in its unity, its contours, a being in itself, in its *intrastructure*. It is no longer turned *towards* the others, but rather turned *into* itself. Whereas ethnography relates, contextualises, adds,

and inserts, and is thus profoundly *socio-logical*, volumography separates, and brackets what is around a being; thus it extracts.

Extraction indicates the movement of pulling a ‘being’ out of its environment, context, or situations. However, it is not an abstraction. The difference between the Latin prepositions *ex-* and *ab-* is that the former denotes an exit, whereas the latter denotes a removal. Exit implies that the being thus extracted carries what it is and what it has. Abstraction is vaguer, presenting a *de facto* undefined being. It is from the extracted figure, in the awareness of this methodological gesture, that the observation of a human being can be made. This, however, is not ethnography.

In concrete terms, film shadowing is the ideal method, practised for as long as possible, without interruption, focusing on one specific person, and avoiding the inclusion of others. This also applies to the description. The observer is like the ‘shadow’ of the person being observed: not behind the individual, but beside or in front of them. The observer is the shadow that wants to access the reality of presences and existences.

In this regard, the anthropologist, whose presence does not interfere with that of the other, is more than a shadow. In any case, the anthropologist is a determined shadow that searches and scans, and what they see is mixed, indecisive, hesitant, and shady – ‘not-really’. The anthropologist no longer sees relations, but only beings who try, who fail, who do not go all the way, remaining at the threshold of their volume. Measurements are also possible, as a calculation of the proportions of action, rest, strangeness, and tension in a presence, for example.

The responses of the individual being observed can contribute to this quantification. For each moment, a combination of activity-passivity coefficients indicates a characteristic mode of presence. In fact, each person always accumulates these modes of presence, with different intensities, which must be identified, made explicit, and measured. In any case, the researcher should not start from the restrictive definitions of existence that one or another philosophy of existence has claimed, associating existence with freedom, commitment,

subjectivity, or anxiety. Each is right at different times of the day – be it for a few minutes or a few moments.

It is noteworthy that the shadowing method-when practised from different perspectives (Czarniawska, 2007) – is not considered in the social sciences as a key issue in understanding the act of existing:

In the study of behavior in public places, the advances begun by Georg Simmel and continued by Erving Goffman and John Lofland have not seen new leaps for 30 years. It is time to move beyond the atemporal, fly-on-the-wall perspective of the situationally specific participant observer to see the meaning of the current situation within the longer-term framework of a participant's biography as he or she moves from one arena of situated interaction to another, always aware of what in situ co-respondents cannot fully know, that what is currently happening has retroactive and prospective meanings based on the overarching trajectories of his or her own social life. (Katz, 2009: 286)

It seems to me that Katz's proposal in no way eliminates the risk of diluting the chosen being in situations and with others. A particular individual is sometimes even chosen as the direct and explicit theme for observation and analysis in social anthropology as well as in sociology. Some researchers indeed present 'portraits', with varying levels of detail and degrees of assiduous focus on one individual. There are many such portraits in social anthropology. I am thinking here of the remarkable works of Crapanzano (1980), Biehl (2013), and Pandian & Mariappan (2014). But in *addition* to the chosen individual, *next to* it, there are many other elements: families, institutions, social systems, divinities, the researcher himself, etc. These elements which are also described and analyzed are more than just information. They are significant in the analysis.

This contextualizing approach is also found in life-stories and in the biographical method in general, and typically in Sartre's biographies, in particular the one he devoted to Flaubert, *The Family Idiot*.<sup>2</sup> Compared with this ethnographic focus on the individual placed in a social context to

understand actions, activities, relationships, and situations, the non-ethnographic focus on a volume of being constitutes a reversed operation. Actions, relationships, and social situations are made secondary to the being, for the challenge is to understand a human entity in itself. The human being is an astonishing entity in the social sciences. One can work on a city to understand a city, or on an institution to understand an institution. By contrast, a human being is usually investigated to look for other things. It is intrinsically 'scalable'. Non-ethnographic consideration of the human in volume seeks to resist this 'scaleability', by looking at and analysing each 'volumic' entity in and for itself.

### Returning to other foundations

To perform non-ethnography is to criticise ethnography, seek solutions, and find foundations other than the diversity of cultures. Anthropology, as it is understood here, is founded on non-ethnography not only as a method but also as a principle. It claims not to seek support in the diversity of metaphysics that ethnographers, especially social anthropologists, might encounter in their fieldwork. Instead, it seeks to find foundations in Greek philosophy. This means going where ethnography does not want to go. I believe that anthropology needs some Greek philosophers, in particular Parmenides and Aristotle (the reversal is total...), because ethnography has forgotten them, or devalued them implicitly or explicitly, in its aim to rehabilitate non-Western forms of thought. Ultimately, let us remember, the challenge is to identify an anthropological science that is not social, and thus would be different from sociology.

It is relevant here to call on Amerindian myths to help anthropologists think. The question is: what can be gained in terms of advancing anthropology, given that there is a reality and that anthropologists must be as precise as possible in describing it? For example, based on Amerindian metaphysics, Viveiros de Castro (2014: 66–67) writes that 'each persona infinitely differs from itself', by its capacity to be another in a permanent 'self-difference' or in a 'fluent intensive difference'. The 'becoming' is more important than the terms themselves; it is

seen as the ‘movement of difference’, escaping unity, in a world where ‘bodies and names, souls and actions, egos and others are interpenetrated’, where ‘self-identical entities’ are replaced by ‘immediately relational multiplicities’ (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 66, 73).<sup>3</sup> Be they beings thought of as intrinsically relational, or relations without being, we are here still in the relational universe of social anthropology and the wider social sciences.

While Viveiros de Castro (2014: 43) intends to propose a new anthropology – an anthropology of the concept, of ‘conceptual imagination’ focused on ‘the styles of thought proper to the collectives’ – he deplors the fact that anthropologists have remained ‘narcissists’ contemplating themselves through the other, being ‘a little too obsessed with determining the attributes or criteria that fundamentally distinguish the subject of anthropological discourse from everything it is not: them (which really in the end means us), the non-Occidentals, the nonmoderns, the nonhumans’. He thus posits that anthropology (the real one, according to him) must continue to be ‘an art of distances keeping away from the ironic recesses of the Occidental soul’ (Viveiros de Castro, 2014: 42). The limitation of such a perspective is again the understanding of societies or collectivities. I add that a non-ethnography of every being in every country in the world has nothing to do with these oppositions.

Because of the principle that the metaphysics of the others is useful to study due to their ‘difference’ and the impact of their intrinsic relational content, they actually appear to go hand in hand with ethnography. By contrast, non-ethnography is not about studying other intellectual traditions, but about finding its foundations in a part of Greek philosophy, placing being, substance, constancy, contour, and form at the centre of the debate. Parmenides is known as the philosopher of the ball, at the very foundation of philosophy. One of his strong points is the reminder that there is an entity – a ‘being’ – to grasp and to observe. Parmenides does not designate a specific being, for example a human being,

but the characteristics of the being in question nonetheless call out. Parmenides presents it as non-divisible, in one piece, all alike, ‘in the coils of huge bonds’. He adds that ‘strong necessity holds it in the bondage of a limit, which keeps it apart’, remaining the same, ‘like the volume of a spherical ball, and equally poised in every direction from its center’, without more being or less being here and there (in Coxon, 2009: 72–78).

The human ‘ball’ is neither perfect, nor complete. But the image is helpful for thinking and fixing one’s glance. There is indeed a being to look at, or a ‘substance’, as Aristotle (2004: 1071a) states: ‘Given that there are some things that are separate and some that are not separate, it is the latter that are substances’. He also specifies the limit or enclosure of each substance: ‘the extreme point of a particular, the first point outside which no part of the thing can be found and inside which all parts of the thing can be found’ (Aristotle, 2004: 1022a). Aristotle (2004: 1004b) writes suggestively of what we can understand as a good example of research: ‘Who, except the philosopher, is going to ask whether Socrates and Socrates seated is the same thing? If that is not the philosopher’s job, who is going to ask whether “Socrates” is the same as “Socrates seated”?’

It is not possible to elaborate Aristotelian speculations here, but this would be precisely the job of the anthropologist, who would seek to observe the substance and its qualifications, identifying what remains identical, and what changes, moment by moment, for the short or long term. With their reality to be known, these substances are separated from each other and from the observer who wishes to observe them. Like the biologist who tracks a distinct molecule with fluorescent markers via a sophisticated microscope in order to observe its fluctuations, the anthropologist can follow and observe human volumes. To look at each being in its entirety, I claim, is also to decontextualise it, to avoid diluting it by adding others, situations, and events.

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3. A similar criticism could be levelled at the theory of individuals proposed by Marilyn Strathern, seeking to deconstruct the human entity reduced to fragments and a play of exchanges (Strathern, 2018: 244).

It is therefore almost normal that such Greek ‘texts’ have not been called upon to look at beings separately and in themselves. Indeed, anthropology, becoming empirical, became social and cultural, with the fear of becoming *anthropometry*, which was more or less anatomico-racist. It was also at this moment that Marx (1845: thesis 6) wrote that ‘the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations’. He thus refuses ‘to presuppose an abstract – isolated – human individual’. A little earlier, Kant (2006: 3), while insisting on the importance of consciousness, asked what the human ‘as a free-acting being makes of himself [sic], or can and should make of himself’.

These ideas do not escape a human being who acts in a situation, as a ‘citizen of the world’, able to adapt to the conceptions of others, capable of moral action in a ‘moral world’. The being is clearly thought about in relation to others. The wholeness, which Parmenides refers to as the ball and which Aristotle refers to as the substance, remains unobserved, psychology having chosen the study of psyches in the plural. The empirical possibility of looking at a human being thus arrived too late, unless it arrived because that being was thought of in a situation, this situation taking precedence over the human being, the background taking precedence over the figure, always already with others, with other humans, in an environment, in a given context. The social sciences developed with this in mind, telescoping each other, in the manner that sociology and anthropology have.

Hence there is a need to consider the possibility of a radical anthropology, one that is radically different from sociology. I would like this to be the task of existential anthropology, but in this case, it cannot be ‘an anthropology whose object is to understand [...] the eventualities, exigencies and experiences of social Being’ (Jackson, 2005: xxviii). For then, what is the difference with an existential sociology that proposes to ‘include consideration of authenticity, life meaning – orientations, death or negative

experience, and triadic scheme of freedom choice – [and] responsibility as the main program elements for the paradigm of existential sociology’ (Kotarba and Melnikov, 2023: 12)?

Concretely, existential anthropology would be the radical study of beings, taken for themselves, in their own singularities. It would be the science that truly describes separate individuals and compares singularities. *Volumographies* would become *volumology*. It means understanding the volume of a being as a stable structure, in its existential entirety, with its various components, actions, emotions, moods, gestures, thoughts, and memories, but also social roles, socio-cultural affiliations, a style of one’s own, with temperament and character.

It also means studying the structuring of these components *in* a volume of being, moment by moment, according to rigorous methodologies of observation and deciphering.<sup>4</sup> It is a way of seeing, in the continuity of moments, how traits that are specific to each volume of being combine in their *intrastructuration*. The mathematician René Thom (1990: 103) writes: ‘Every thing exists, as a unique and individuated thing, only insofar as it is capable of resisting time – a certain amount of time’. Existential anthropology would then especially study how each being continues in a certain stability, despite its constant exposure to others and to events, despite its relations to the world. Such an anthropology is a horizon to be reached, always to be completed, in order to respond to Virginia Woolf’s remarks noted above.

One might consider a redistribution of the humanities and social sciences. Researchers often fail to understand what their topic really is and they do not consider the scientific divisions within which they work. Alongside metaphysics, which, according to Aristotle (2004: 1003a), studies being as being, the various ‘departmental disciplines’ cut out ‘some section of what is’. In mathematics, for example, it is a quantitative being; in physics, it is a being in motion; in biology, it is a being insofar as it lives.

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4. For example, in *Le Volume Humain* (2017), I proposed over 200 pages of description based on a continuous film lasting almost 12 hours – the camera being focused on a single person.

So why should there not be, among all the other sciences, a science of the human being as a separate entity? That would be anthropology. In this redistribution, there would be anthropology, to study humans in their entirety; psychology, to study the psychic part of humans; 'associatology', to study humans in association, in relation to each other and to other beings or objects; sociology, to study social systems, communities, and institutions; culturology, materiology and textology, to study cultures, objects and texts; geography, to study spatiality. There is nothing pejorative in these classifications, just a clarification of everyone's job.

According to the aforementioned distinctions, the historical sciences would then study beings, objects, texts, relationships and institutions taken from their past. The same division could apply to living beings other than humans, such as non-human primates or other animals. Associatology, sociology, and culturology need ethnography, but not anthropology, which aims to look at one being at a time, according to a different methodological principle.

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### Notes

1. Note also the fully relationalist use of the term 'phenomenography' in Niewöhner et al. (2016).
2. Referring to Sartre's 'regressive-progressive' method, Michael Jackson (2013: 83) writes that it involves 'both a creative forward method in which

one grasps and articulates one's possibilities of being and a reflexive analytical movement that takes one back on a journey of exploration among the objects, people, places, and events that grounds those possibilities of being'.

3. A similar criticism could be levelled at the theory of individuals proposed by Marilyn Strathern (2018: 244), seeking to deconstruct the human entity reduced to fragments and a play of exchanges.
4. For example, in *Le Volume Humain* (Piette, 2017), I proposed over 200 pages of description based on a continuous film lasting almost 12 hours – the camera being focused on a single person.

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