Meeting you for the first time: Descriptive categories of an intersubjective experience

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> Context • There is little research currently on first encounters with a first-person epistemology and empirical evidence. **> Problem** • We want to provide an answer to the question: "What is the lived experience of being with others for the first time?" **> Method** • We rely on a first-person epistemology and a second-person method, namely the explicitation interview, a technique of guided retrospective introspection. We analyze a corpus of 24 interviews conducted after planned first encounters. We identify generic descriptive categories of subjects' lived experience. **> Results** • We propose a typology of the micro-moments that constitute people's intersubjective experiences during first encounters. We identify five descriptive categories of these experiences: act, mode of intersubjectivity, sense of agency, experiential modality, and content in terms of involved persons. **> Implications** • This article highlights what a careful investigation of subjective experience can bring to the understanding of intersubjectivity. It shows in particular how an applied phenomenology can complement and revisit less empirical philosophical approaches. It can be useful to scholars conducting third-person studies on first encounters. This study is a first step toward investigating more spontaneous encounters, occurring for instance in everyday situations or in less usual settings. We are currently analyzing interviews on first encounters between health practitioners and their clients, which will offer practical advice to both sides. **> Constructivist content** • Constructivist approaches argue that "reality" is actively brought forth by the subject rather than passively acquired. Questioning the separation between the objective world and subjective experience, they examine how people build their own reality through their perceptions, through their experience of the world, and through their interactions with others. Our study focuses on first encounters "from within," listening to subjects' accounts of their lived experience. We aim to defend and promote the experiential perspective in the field of cognitive science. We therefore follow Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, for whom the "concern is to open a space of possibilities in which the circulation between cognitive science and human experience can be fully appreciated and to foster the transformative possibilities of human experience in a scientific culture." **> Key words** • Intersubjectivity, experience, first encounter, first-person epistemology, micro-phenomenology, explicitation interview, micro-experiential phenomenon, generic descriptive category.

Introduction

« 1 » What is the lived experience of being with others for the first time? During a first encounter, is it possible to "put oneself in someone else's shoes"? Conversely, can one remain drawn within oneself in front of another person? In this article, we address these questions "from within," listening to subjects' lived experiences in such situations. We first provide some background knowledge on intersubjectivity and why it matters to study it with first-person approaches. We then describe our method, namely the explicitation interview, and our data collection on the lived experience of first encounters. We expose the micro-experiential phenomena underlying it, and how we analyze them in terms of generic descriptive categories. Finally, we discuss our findings and how they are a first step toward investigating more ecological situations.

Intersubjectivity as a topic of scientific and philosophical investigations

« 2 » Intersubjectivity refers both to what separates, creates a gap, and what is common, i.e., what articulates two, or more, subjectivities (Ciccone 2006). It is at the heart of interpersonal relationships, whether they unfold easily or with difficulty, are infused with enthusiasm or hesitation, with open-mindedness or resistance, etc. (De Jae-

gher 2015). Intersubjectivity has been a recurrent topic of investigation in philosophy, and stands prominently, in particular, in Edmund Husserl's study on one's constitution with others:

" The intrinsically first being, the being that precedes and bears every worldly objectivity, is transcendental intersubjectivity: the universe of monads, which effects its communion in various forms. " (Husserl 1960: 156)

« 3 » A large body of work is available, with ramifications regarding notably the way the subject and subjectivity are circumscribed, or the relationship between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and whether the former precedes the latter or vice versa. Hanne De Jaegher, Barbara Pieper, Daniel Clénin and Thomas Fuchs (2017) focus, for example, on the embedded and interactive aspects of social understanding. They do so by studying the roles played by the bodies, by the interaction processes, and by interpersonal experience. Relying on Vasu Reddy (2008), they characterize intersubjectivity as a meaningful engagement between subjects, beyond mere coexistence, and mutual need of multiple first-person perspectives. According to De Jaegher and Ezequiel Di Paolo (2007), intersubjectivity is co-created by two (or more) subjects, and interactions can acquire their own autonomy and "influence, form and transform their participants" (De Jaegher & Di Paolo 2007: 486). As for Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009), they present the concept of social understanding as a continuous and dynamic process of participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation. This process corresponds to an interactive coordination of several embedded agents in which the lived bodies of the participants generate a common intercorporeality.

« 4 » For George Herbert Mead (1934), self-development is possible thanks to social interactions. How a person socializes depends on the reactions and answers provided by individuals surrounding her actions. The coordination, or attunement, of respective perspectives is an elaborate dance: I am aiming at others, and others are aiming at me (Martin & Gillespie 2010). The crossing of these reciprocal acts, which Husserl calls coexistence of intentionalities

(Husserl 1960), is what should be studied under the term intersubjectivity. For Martin Buber, the subject is primarily made of "relations to others," and not a solitary *cogito*: "at the same time as the 'you' occurs, so does the 'I'" (our translation of "en même temps qu'est posé le tu, le je est posé") (Misrahi 2012: 16).

« 5 » Bin Kimura (1972) defines the originating co-presence of a person and her conspecifics (the "*hito to hito tono aida*") as the first dimension of the being-with-others. The self does not emerge first as an isolated monad, which builds relationships with others only at a later stage. Rather, it finds its primary shape in interpersonal relationships. For instance, during early development, family relations form a primary intersubjective environment in which the structure of the self is built on the basis of shared experiential contents: feelings, perceptions, thoughts or linguistic significations (Tomasello 1999).

« 6 » Buber and Kimura's statements converge on the idea that social interactions do much more than modulate our individuality, and eventually turn us into who we are (De Jaegher 2015). They, and noticeably first encounters, often leave us transformed, although sometimes in subtle ways we may not be aware of.

« 7 » It is worth mentioning that beyond psychological mechanisms, in our relationships, body sensations also play a role in the construction of subjectivity. This is what Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1965) means by inter-corporeality, focusing on the relation between one's own body and that of the other, and which he sees as the foundation of intersubjectivity.

« 8 » Much work on intersubjectivity is also related to the concept of empathy. According to Daniel Stern, our mental life is co-created and the idea of a one-person psychology is no longer tenable. He thinks of the intersubjective matrix as the "overriding crucible in which interacting minds take on their current form" (Stern 2004: 77f). He identifies what he calls intersubjective consciousness: a specific form of reflexivity that appears when a person becomes aware of the content of her mind or actions because someone else's mind is reflecting them back to her. This process occurs when this person accepts someone else's thoughts,

i.e., when she accepts what these thoughts tell her about who she is. This corresponds to Serge Tisseron et al.'s (2013) process of intersubjective empathy, which characterizes how one's self-consciousness temporarily espouses someone else's situation in order to share her experience and adopt her point of view.

« 9 » Reciprocity is pervasive in all previous considerations on individuality. Relations to others are essential to one's subjective development, and we are therefore all mutually involved in our respective subjective growths. The concept of ubuntu is a form of relational spirituality emphasizing the basic connectedness of all human beings beyond all lines of race and class (Battle 2000). It hence leads to defining humanity by our reciprocal connections and sharing: "*I am because you are.*"

From theoretical considerations to the lived experience of intersubjectivity

« 10 » Answering an initial question such as "what is the lived experience of being with others for the first time?" requires a definition of experience. In our work, we adopt the *individual experience* as the fundamental unit of analysis, and define it as an ongoing process that is lived "from within." We follow Natalie Depraz, Varela and Pierre Vermersch's conception of experience:

" […] the lived, first-hand acquaintance with, and account of, the entire span of our minds and actions, with the emphasis not on the context of the action but on the immediate and embodied, and thus inextricably personal, nature of the content of the action. Experience is always that which a singular subject is subjected to at any given time and place, that to which she has access 'in the first person'. " (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2003: 2)

« 11 » Experience is situated in a social and material world. Indeed, it spans over one's social and material interactions, and also impregnates one's bodily state at any given moment. On this basis, experience as we study it is characterized by several properties described hereafter.

« 12 » First, the experiencing subject is an I who is not only a point of departure toward the world, but also the end point of the ways the world affects her:

" […] with experience there is something like an encounter between a subject and a reality that transcends him and which, by its novelty, creates surprise. From this we may conclude that experience is, for the subject, both active, in so far as it represents a formative trial, in the sense of an attempt at knowledge of what is encountered, and passive in as much as it is a trial in the sense of an ordeal." (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2003: 171)

« 13 » Martin Heidegger provides a description of the passive dimension of experience when he writes the following:

" To undergo an experience with something – be it a thing, a person, or a god – means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we talk of 'undergoing' an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. It is something itself that comes about, comes to pass, happens." (Heidegger 1976: 57)

« 14 » Second, because experience is both active and passive, it has to be understood in terms of relation. Hence, in Husserl's phenomenology, the subject's relation to the world is an intentional relation, which binds consciousness to phenomena. What is "real" is a lived and experienced world, which always unfolds in front of the subject from a specific intentional act. This approach is centered *both* on the subject and on the world and in doing so, tones down the duality between subject and object. This relational stance is also adopted by Thomas Nagel (1974), for whom a living being's experience of the world is what defines her as a being.

« 15 » Third, when a phenomenon occurs to a subject, her experience is characterized by its holistic nature. In other terms, an experience is a composite of various elements that cannot easily be set apart. Vermersch (2006) highlights the different layers of the lived experience, which relate to its perceptual, cognitive, motor, or emotional aspects. This typology echoes John McCarthy and Peter Wright's (2004) four experiential threads: the *sensual* thread (sensorial involvement in experience), the *emotional* thread (meaning attributed to an object or a person on the basis of our values, objec-

tives and desires), the *compositional* thread (relations between the parts and the whole of an experience) and the *spatiotemporal* thread (the links of experience to the past and to the future). McCarthy and Wright's fourth experiential thread refers to an essential component of experience: time. The holistic approach to experience accounts for its inscription in time: although the time of the lived experience is always the present (Stern 2004), it integrates both the past and the future. More specifically, within a phenomenological perspective, one aims at the study of things as they appear or are given to our experience, in the present moment, with a temporality of the order of seconds or fractions of seconds. However, for Husserl, in the present time one finds echoes of the past (retentions), and what he calls the future of the present (protentions). Husserlian retentions are the immediate past, which still resonates in the present moment, much like the tail of a comet. Protentions point to the immediate future, either predictable or implicit, given what has happened in the past or the present of the present moment. Retentions and protentions are thus both part of present-time experience, and belong to a global, unified and unique experience occurring in a subjective now. This relation of experience to time means that it can only be approached from a well-defined angle: the study of a peculiar and specific moment (Vermersch 2000). Otherwise, one is instead dealing with a class of experiences, or with something general.

« 16 » Fourth, at the moment it is lived, experience engages several types of awareness. One of them is the subject's reflective consciousness, i.e., what she is conscious of, and can easily report. Another part of experience is below the threshold of this consciousness and is not directly accessible to the subject who lives it. It is therefore known as pre-reflective. This non-reflective part of consciousness, which Vermersch calls direct consciousness, covers everything that passively affects the subject. It is everything that gets deposited in passive memory, and which creates retentions. This points to Husserl's phenomenological unconscious, and Vermersch's organizational unconscious or potential (Vermersch 2017). These two types of awareness may or may not be visible to an outside observer.

« 17 » Integrating philosophical inquiries on this issue, the use of the explicitation interview described in a latter section of this article is associated with the above dimensions of the lived experience: its situated and embodied nature, its dual agentive and relational properties, its holistic nature, its temporal quality and its inscription in different kinds of consciousness.

A lack of data on lived intersubjective experiences

« 18 » Despite the abundance of literature on intersubjectivity (De Jaegher 2015; De Jaegher & Di Paolo 2007; Fuchs & De Jaegher 2009; Reddy 2008), data are very rare when it comes to the lived experience of intersubjectivity, although it can be argued that experience, and its description, should be at the heart of humanistic approaches. Two notable exceptions are studies by De Jaegher et al. (2017) and by Tom Froese, Hiroyuki Iizuka and Takashi Ikegami (2014), with the latter focusing on the development of social awareness using multi-user Human-Computer Interfaces and first-person reports. The current lack of data can partly be explained by the deficit of methods oriented toward recording and assessing one's experience. The explicitation interview, described later in this article, is a well-structured method to bridge the gap, and offers rich and concrete phenomenological data. Importantly, first-person approaches, which focus on the subject's point of view, are sometimes undervalued in comparison to third-person approaches, on the assumption that an external point of view offers greater objectivity. The limits of this last statement have however been stressed, and the epistemic validity of first-person approaches, and especially of the explicitation interview, has been analyzed in detail (Petitmengin & Bitbol 2009). Especially, claims denying subjects' introspective abilities (Nisbett & Wilson 1977) have been rebutted (Petitmengin & Bitbol 2009; Petitmengin et al. 2013). Research on lived experience, while recognized as crucial in philosophical and empirical approaches to the study of the mind, is moreover confronted with the problem that each examination of experience seems to change the experience itself. Many have taken this so-called "excavation fallacy" (Kordeš & Demšar 2018) to

169

undermine the possibility of a first-person inquiry as a scientific practice.

« 19 » It must be stressed that external observations leave aside entire facets of the situation at play. Indeed, they cannot access what is unfolding for each person in an unobservable way, and which constitutes her subjective experience. This to some extent occurs "behind" physical movements that can be recorded by a video camera. It also occurs "in front" of neuronal patterns of activity that can be recorded by brain imaging techniques. This unobservable aspects of subjects' experience can, however, be reported by them, hence the benefits of asking them to do so with a specific method.

First encounters as a prime testbed to study intersubjectivity

« 20 » In our efforts to better understand intersubjectivity as it is lived by subjects, we decided to focus on a specific category of intersubjective situations: first-time encounters. This choice was based on several reasons. One reason is that, given the complexity of intersubjectivity as a concept and as an attribute of some lived experiences, first-time encounters restrict the field of investigation to a well-defined situation: two persons being put in the presence of each other for the first time. While this may seem restrictive with respect to the diversity of intersubjective situations (later encounters, group meetings, etc.), their inherent richness still holds the promise of shedding light on intersubjectivity from a more general standpoint. Indeed, the initial encounter of two persons generates in both of them a range of cognitions, which altogether contribute to the intersubjective density of the situation, with respect to later encounters where novelty has mostly recessed. In cognitive psychology, the study of first impressions – initial judgments made about people very quickly, with little information, and which are often accurate to a considerable extent – opens a window on what happens in the very first instants (Evans et al. 2000; Bar, Neta & Linz 2006; Willis & Todorov 2006; Schiller et al. 2009; Ambady 2010). This unfolding of cognitions is a process under the influence of specific knowledge, norms and expectations, and is therefore partly shaped by previous experiences. This is exemplified by the role played by stereotypes in impression formation (Branscombe & Smith 1990; Abreu 1999; Dukes & Maddox 2008; Yeung & Kashima 2010), or by the hypothesis confirmation bias, which describes how one is biased toward asserting one's initial perceptions of someone else as the meeting carries on. From yet another perspective, psychotherapists study how the early moments of their encounter with a new client impact on what will later unravel in the therapeutic process, and in particular on the construction of a therapeutic alliance with this client (Sexton et al. 2005; Hilsenroth & Cromer 2007). These different lines of work suggest that first-time encounters are a rich setting in terms of intersubjectivity. Lastly, first-time encounters reduce the overlapping of memories, in contrast with later encounters. During the latter, one can hypothesize that previous encounters with the same person may interfere and generate confusion. Restricting oneself to first-time encounters therefore contributes to the clarity of the data that can be collected on the lived experience, especially when using the explicitation interview (see below).

Study

Experimental design

« 21 » Among the variety of first encounters, one may initially distinguish between fortuitous and planned encounters, i.e., for example, between a random encounter on the street and a job interview. One may also conceive of a gradient of situations, from a totally unexpected encounter to going to knock at the door of new neighbors to going on a first date. What may differ is the level of engagement and of expectations. In the case of a job interview, for example, the applicant may thus have made great efforts to prepare herself, or to learn about the recruiter she has never met, in order to maximize her chances of getting hired.

« 22 » For our study, we needed both a protocol in which people could meet for the first time, and an interview technique tailored to the challenges of collecting information on lived experience. We chose to study planned first encounters. Such situations have limited ecological validity because of the experimental setting and the instructions given to the participants. As in every possible interview situation, the interviewee may also show a social desirability bias. We thus do not claim that they provide results applicable to natural encounters. They are rather a first step in the micro-phenomenological study of first encounters.

« 23 » As for the protocol, we chose to invite pairs of people who had never met before. Our participants only knew that they were going to partake in an experiment on interpersonal relationships, that they would meet and converse with someone else, and be interviewed. Although no strict control was enforced, we matched participants to have occurrences of male-female, male-male and female-female pairs. This choice resulted from the difficulty of anticipating what effect gender and gender pairing could have on the lived experience of the participants. We therefore chose to allow for all three possible pairings in order to collect experiences as diverse as possible.

« 24 » Two experimenters were needed for each pair of participants. People were welcomed separately outside the building and led to a room where they met the other participant. Instructions were given that we would leave them together in the room for 10 minutes, that they could use this time as they wished to learn about the other person, and that we would then separately ask them to briefly present that person. We mentioned that no recording device of any sort was concealed in the room. We then left them, came back, and led the participants to two other rooms, where interviews were conducted. Each participant was first asked to provide a brief presentation of what they had learnt of the other person. This was followed by a longer – on average 40 minutes – interview focused on what had been experienced during the encounter. This specific type of interview is described in the next paragraphs. Allowing 10 minutes for the participants to meet and converse was the result of a trade-off between different constraints: on the one hand, having at least some time for each of them to learn something about the other person. On the other hand, we wanted the whole experiment to last under one hour for each participant, so as not to take up too much of her time.

Additionally, given that the explicitation interview most often consists in fragmenting very short moments of experience, 10 minutes seemed enough to collect material for our investigation. After asking for a coarse-grained description of the encounter to get a better understanding of it as a whole, we let participants choose the more specific moment during the 10 minutes, or in some interviews the moments, they wanted to focus on. We did so because better and more extensive information on experience is usually gathered when the interviewee can focus on something genuinely meaningful to her. In a dyad, participants could therefore choose different, non-overlapping moments. At the beginning of the interview, participants were told in simple words about the expected process of revisiting their subjective experience of the encounter with the interviewer's guidance. They were also told about the nature of the interviewing process, and how it differed from other situations such as a chat between friends or a clinical interview. They were then asked to grant their permission to be interviewed, before being given time to start to reconnect to their past experience. The questioning *per se* could then begin.

Method: The explicitation interview

Overview

« 25 » The explicitation interview, also known as the micro-phenomenological interview, has been developed and tailored over several decades by Vermersch (1994, 2012) and Claire Petitmengin (2006). The "entretien d'explicitation" was founded by Pierre Vermersch in the 1990s. The first English translation was elicitation interview, which was then replaced by "explicitation interview." Claire Petitmengin pursued the development of the method, especially for data analysis, and used the term micro-phenomenological interview. The approach connects several lines of thought: Jean Piaget's theory of consciousness, Georges Gusdorf's theory of affective memory, Husserl's phenomenology, Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy and Eugene Gendlin's focusing, among others.

« 26 » Explicitation is at the heart of an applied approach to micro-phenomenology. Indeed, departing from more theoreti-

cal considerations, it consists in a guided retrospective introspection, i.e., it aims at guiding an interviewee in the recall of a past situation in order to build a detailed and holistic description of her lived experience during it. This interview technique is based on very firm attentional guidance, to accompany and to maintain the interviewee in an activity of introspection. It does not however guide her on the content, which comes to her consciousness through a process of letting go. This is possible thanks to a particular stance on the part of the interviewer, guiding the interviewee's attention with open and non-inductive questions but never inducing the content of what the interviewee says. During this process, she suspends her judgment – this is the Husserlian epoché –, which allows her to access her past lived experience. According to Depraz, Varela and Vermersch,

> one accomplishes the epoché in three principal phases: A0: Suspending your 'realist' prejudice that what appears to you is truly the state of the world; this is the only way you can change the way you pay attention to your own lived experience; in other words, you must break with the 'natural attitude'; A1: Redirecting your attention from the 'exterior' to the 'interior'; A2: Letting-go or accepting your experience. (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2003: 25)

« 27 » This reference lived experience is also called "V1" (vécu 1 in French) by explicitation practitioners. It is contrasted with "V2" (vécu 2 in French), which is the time and situation of the interview (and which is also a lived experience). By "holistic" we mean that the interviewer is interested in the whole of experience, with its different facets. These facets include the interviewee's cognitive/mental operations, but also her physical actions, her sensations and her emotions. The temporal dimension of experience which, as said previously, is one of its fundamental properties, is carefully accounted for, with an effort to decompose larger-scale experiences into series of very fine-grained microscopic experiential events. In more specific terms, a step of fragmentation is followed by a step of qualitative expansion: any micro-experiential moment is investigated along the various dimensions of experience.

« 28 » An explicitation interview is always addressing a singular situation experienced by the interviewee, even if she has repeatedly experienced similar experiences. This requirement is important to obtain specific descriptions and not generalizations, for instance, about know-how or habits. It also pays considerable attention to the perlocutionary effects of the interviewer's interventions. First, to minimize induction and the construction of distorted or false memories (Schacter 2001), the use of carefully crafted open questions is the interviewer's primary concern. "Why" questions are not used, while "how" and "what" questions are favored, e.g., "what were you doing when you (+verb of action)…?," "how did you manage to…?," "what did you pay attention to?," "how do you know that?," "how does it feel?," etc. Considerations of time are often added to these questions to help the interviewee navigate the chronology of her experience, e.g., "and at that very moment, what did you do?," "and just after doing that, what did you pay attention to?," etc. Second, questions are supplemented by recapitulations of what has been previously said, with great attention to the interviewee's words and descriptions in order to facilitate recalling. Without a tool such as the explicitation interview, and the targeted questions of the interviewer, the pre-reflective aspects of the experience under study, i.e., the part of this experience that remained below the threshold of consciousness, remains very elusive to the interviewee. Shedding light on it is then especially interesting since it contributes to a fuller understanding of what was lived, and how.

« 29 » Harvesting such details of the lived past experience implies the induction and maintenance of a specific figure of speech in the interviewee, named an "embodied figure of speech" (EFS) by Pierre Vermersch ("Position de parole incarnée" in French). This figure enables a presence to oneself, in what is a slightly modified state of consciousness. It leads to an intimate contact with the past situation, and therefore to the possibility of quasi-reliving it and of providing a step-by-step description of its content. The EFS is not spontaneous and adopting it upon the interviewer's guidance may be easy or more difficult depending on the interviewee. It can be assessed

with different verbal and non-verbal cues – like unfocused eyes or the slowing down of speech, the use of the personal pronoun "I" rather than "we," etc.

« 30 » A key concept of the explicitation interview is the concept of satellites of action. The technique aims at collecting the various operations performed by the interviewee. This is the core of the description, around which a number of satellites gravitate. They give its meaning to action but are not what the interviewer is primarily interested in. They are:

- the context of the experience – where and when it happened, i.e., the circumstances;
- the purpose of actions – why they happened: the objectives and intentions;
- the interviewer's theoretical or experiential knowledge;
- the beliefs, judgments, justifications or rationalizations during V2.

« 31 » Finding one's way in the interviewee's discourse relies on constantly monitoring whether an action or a satellite of action is being expressed. Questions can then be asked to bring the interviewee back to her experience when she departs from it. Context, however, facilitates the recall of past situations and can be questioned to this end when needed.

First-person epistemology and second-person method of data collection

« 32 » Along with other data-collection techniques, the explicitation interview is a first-person approach, in the sense that the resulting material is made of the interviewee's words and subjective point of view. This comes in opposition to third-person approaches, which are based on an external point of observation. Words provide access here to the subjective experience (while gestures during an explicitation interview can also provide cues for subjective experience, they are not the primary focus of attention), and subtle discriminations between experiences will derive from variations in linguistic usage ("he says that" will therefore be interpreted differently from "he tells me that," or "I perceive that" differently from "I see that" or "I feel that"). This does not mean, however, that words need to be analyzed *stricto sensu* in all situations: a statement like

"I *know* that she is scared" does not point to knowledge, as knowing primarily suggests, but rather to a feeling or reasoning.

« 33 » As in other interview techniques, the explicitation interview is the interaction between an interviewer (named B in research on explicitation) and an interviewee (named A). A's first-person data are therefore collected through B's intervention and guidance, which leads to classifying the technique as a second-person approach. As already explained, B's role is crucial in assisting A in her recalling, in a quasi-reliving, of her past experience.

Overview of the collected data

« 34 » During the month of June 2014, we conducted 24 explicitation interviews with 11 men and 13 women. Interviewees were aged 25–55, were highly educated and had a middle-to-high socio-economic status. They were native French speakers (19 of them) or fluent speakers of French as a second language (5 of them). The total duration of the recordings was 14 hours, 39 minutes and 50 seconds. After transcription, with the addition of a few codes (see below), this amounted to a total of 149,546 words (with a mean number of 6,231 words per transcription and a standard deviation of 978 words, according to Microsoft Word).[1]

Step-by-step treatment of the data

« 35 » We followed the method of analysis developed in Petitmengin (2006) and Vermersch (2012). However, given our focus on intersubjectivity and encounters, rather than restricting ourselves to actions performed by A, we extended the standard approach to integrate interactions and A's experiences as a target of her partner's actions. We called this partner A*. The successive operations applied to the data unfolded as follows:

- Attribute codes to the interviewer and the interviewee's respective interventions – B1 for the interviewer's first intervention, A2 for the interviewee's first reply, B3 for the interviewer's second intervention etc. –, for the sake of easy referencing;
- Clean the transcription: remove time-codes, pauses, aborted sentences, du-

1 | Interview transcriptions are available upon request to the authors.

plications, signs of hesitation or brief interventions of agreement, for both A and B. Facing the delicate question of the punctuation of the transcriptions, we chose to minimize punctuation, and in particular not to use commas, periods or semi-colons. Indeed, the transcribed text is only a representation of the corresponding audio signal and such signs would be an interpretation rather than a simple observation. We also chose not to indicate pauses. Our transcripts being short, these conventions do not interfere much with their readability. Ellipses, i.e., when two components of a verbatim statement are separated by other words and in particular by interventions from the interviewer, are indicated by "[…]." Segments enclosed in parentheses do not correspond to words uttered by the interviewee, but are here to facilitate readers' understanding when missing the context of the verbatim statement;

- Distinguish passages describing V1 from other passages such as B's interventions and A's comments belonging to V2 and not to V1;
- Single out sentences focused on physical and mental actions, sensations, emotions and body sensations, i.e., differentiate actions from satellites of action; because of our focus on intersubjectivity, both instances of A taking the semantic role of an agent (who performs an action) and of a patient (who undergoes an action) were kept, with attention to pronouns such as "I" and "me," as commonly done, but also to "we," "us" and to the French indefinite personal pronoun;
- Reorganize the sentences selected previously to re-establish the timeline of V1, since A's recall often diverges from it. Given attempts to fragment experiences into smaller components, a hierarchical leveling of the descriptions was adopted when necessary to specify that some micro-experiences were part of a larger experience.

« 36 » For each interview, the result of these successive transformations was a time-ordered summary oriented toward intersubjective actions during V1. This constituted the material for our analyses.

Data Analysis

« 37 » Our analysis falls into the field of qualitative analysis, and therefore echoes its epistemological and methodological challenges (Saldaña 2011). It rested on a patient and iterative craft work to extract meaningful descriptive categories for our target situations.

Extracting meaningful descriptive categories of the intersubjective experience

« 38 » Early investigations of our data suggested we should focus our attention on two complementary aspects: on the one hand, the different synchronic descriptive categories of what we named an "experiential micro-phenomenon" or EMP, for short; on the other hand, the diachronic ordering and unfolding of these EMPs. Of most interest to us were EMPs that would be unobservable from a third-person point of view, and are only accessible through A's recall of her past experience.

« 39 » Regarding the synchronic dimension, comparing fragments of our verbatim statements across interviews led us to consider five descriptive categories for each EMP:

- Act performed by the subject;
- Mode of intersubjectivity;
- Content of the EMP with specific consideration to both participants to the encounter: A alone, A* alone, both A and A*, someone else (specified or unspecified), something (inanimate), and all possible combinations of these elements;
- A's sense of agency during the EMP: either active or passive, as exemplified by the contrast between "I remember" and "memories come back to me";
- Experiential modality: vision, audition, olfaction, bodily sensation or internal language.

« 40 » Delineating the various acts and modes of intersubjectivity was the core of our analysis, and is detailed in the next section. For the sake of illustration, the extracts in Table 1 are analyzed according to the three remaining descriptive categories.[2]

« 41 » It can be seen that taste does not appear in the aforementioned experiential modalities. This comes from the "bottom-up" method we followed to prepare our categories: we did not have any description of taste in our corpus, and therefore did not introduce it in our typology. Another point to underscore regarding the experiential modality is the category of feelings: we followed Christopher Heavey, Russell Hurlburt and Noelle Lefforge (2012)'s "phenomenology of feelings," in which feelings are defined as the experiential aspect of emotions, and sometimes but not always include bodily sensations.

2| The original French verbatim statements for all translations are provided in annex at https://constructivist.info/data/14/2/167.annex.doc

From specific to generic categories

« 42 » To better define the acts and modes of intersubjectivity of our EMPs, we gathered all the relevant extracts of the 24 time-ordered summaries of our interviews. Large sheets of paper were used to this end. We labelled each extract in terms of act and intersubjectivity. These labels were attributed so as to remain close to the words and expressions used by participants, without trying to build exclusive or complementary sets of descriptions. A trade-off was sought between gaining genericity and preserving the essence of what the participants had said. We, however, chose at this stage not to impose too many constraints on the descriptions, so as to promote creativity and discovery in the first steps of the analysis. At this stage, each of us worked independently and studied half of the corpus, which amounted to around 400 EMPs. Some of the labels and their corresponding extracts are given in Table 2.

« 43 » In a second stage of the analysis, we worked together to derive generic sets from the previous labels. This time the aim was to build exclusive and complementary generic labels, to be related to generic sets of EMP. To reach this goal, previous labels were compared and regrouped in different sets until a satisfying result was obtained. We reached a dual classification of our extracts: a first set of elements for the category of acts and a second set related to the modes

Verbatim statements	Content	Sense of agency	Experiential modality
"I said to myself so she's a smoker that's a pity"	A*	active	internal language
"this feeling of being in a strange unlikely place that's what came"	A	passive	feelings
"I knew he felt at ease by the sound of his voice"	A*	active	audition
"I was saying to myself that he must be thinking a bit like me at that moment"	A and A*	active	internal language
"straight away I pictured her living in someone's home"	A*	active	vision
"I have a feeling that she is afraid of crossing the road"	A*	active	feelings
"it was something at an emotional level he might have the same cultural experience […] it's the feeling one can get about a person supposed to have the same experience"	A*, someone else	passive	feelings
"I was picturing her lecturing at the university I was imagining her in this role […] me I would sit opposite in the middle"	A, A*, someone else, something	active	vision
"it surprised me […] it gave me energy actually"	A	passive	x

Table 1 • Descriptive categories of experiential micro-phenomena.

of intersubjectivity, with all extracts being categorized along these two sets. We undertook this process jointly in an effort of intersubjective validation, through discussions and evolving mutual agreements or disagreements on attempts written on paper or whiteboard. At least two or three early classifications were completely dismantled before a satisfying output was reached. Not going too quickly and leaving time to ponder over the qualities and weaknesses of these categorizations was important here. We also looked, at some point, at existing categorizations of cognitive acts, before getting away from them to preserve our bottom-up approach. Table 3 reports and illustrates the elements we identified for the category of acts (leaving aside an undefined element we had to create for a few verbatim statements), while Table 4 does the same for the category of the modes of intersubjectivity.

« 44 » We studied the lived experience of first encounters, via planned situations, and identified five descriptive categories of these experiences: the act, the mode of intersubjectivity, the sense of agency, the experiential modality involved, and the content in

Verbatim statements	Label
"I have a feeling that she is afraid of crossing the road"	To feel the other's emotion
"I try to put myself in her position she who is not Korean but Vietnamese"	To identify with the other
"I feel as though I am closer to him"	To feel the connection between oneself and the other
"still I am shocked because here in Europe one does not ask about age"	To feel unsettled/perplexed while interacting
"I am extremely surprised that she replies to me with her date of birth"	To be surprised
"I asked myself whether this question meant our exchange was turning into some kind of seduction"	To question oneself
"the fluidity broke" (of the exchange)	To feel separated from the other
"I said to myself so she's a smoker that's a pity"	To issue a judgment on the other
"the pedestrian crossing and one person was crossing […] it's me"	To imagine oneself in the situation that the other is describing
"I was imagining things actually things she didn't say"	To imagine another situation than the one the other is describing
"I was picturing her lecturing at the university I was imagining her in this role"	To imagine the other in the situation that she describes
"I want to share that with him"	To be willing to share something with the other
"I said to myself well you've been through that too"	To connect to one's past
"I said to myself wow yes indeed […] I understand"	To 'understand' what the other says
"this feeling of being in a strange unlikely place"	To feel the situation the other is describing
"I put myself in a position where I need to fix things" (with another person)	To guide the interaction by acting on oneself
"I thought that he would probably not take the initiative with the next" (question)	To project something onto the other

Table 2 • First labeling of experiential micro-phenomena.

Act	Example
To imagine	"straight away it's these images of perpetual day of open spaces of this magnificent lake"
To feel	"this feeling of being in a strange unlikely place that's what came" […] it's in the belly […] it's in the pit of the stomach […] in the guts"
To observe	"when I say the words I observe her reactions"
To know	"I know that Swiss Romands speak French"
To remember	"I am projected into something in my head […] I look for a brief moment inside myself I mean in my own memory my own travels […] I see images not of people or animals […] it's an image of an ancient land"
To question oneself	"I wonder if she's laughing because I understood nothing or if she's laughing because she knows she can make some words sound ambiguous"
To evaluate	"I said to myself this is someone who is really open-minded so likes diversity and likes languages"

Table 3 • Identified elements for the category of acts.

terms of involved persons. At each moment, the lived experience can be qualified according to these descriptive categories. With a larger timespan, a few seconds or minutes, in which there are several EMPs, changes in the lived experience can be observed along these categories. For example, an experience can be visual at first, then become olfactory, then become visual again. It can be described as a succession of acts such as to observe, then to remember, then to question oneself, then to observe, and so on. The lived experience can thus be described as a flow of instants, each one instantiating elements of the five descriptive categories we have highlighted.

« 45 » Our classification of acts is reminiscent of existing classifications in cognitive science, although we were not driven by global principles and a necessity of exhaustivity, but rather by organizational principles at the local scale of our 24 interviews. Regarding our main result, i.e., the different modes of intersubjectivity, the first three – to have something in common, to feel a part of the same set, to feel close to the other – are backed by the dyadic nature of the interaction, and offer a symmetry absent from the four other modes. To some extent, they expand Arthur Aron, Elaine Aron and Danny Smollan (1992)'s proposal: a scale of "Inclusion of Other in the Self" to describe a relationship, based on seven Venn-like diagrams of closeness. Our results suggest that while distance and overlapping are ways to characterize intersubjectivity, it can also be experienced in ways that do not involve distance or overlapping, such as "feeling oneself to be part of the same set." A significant assertion of our approach and interpretations is that our different modes of intersubjectivity refer to different experiences. For example, there should be experiential differences between identifying oneself with the other, and identifying the other with oneself. These differences in terms of lived experiences – mental acts, sensations, bodily states, etc. – are the reason why interviewees produce different descriptions of their recalled experience during the explicitation interview. Additionally, most of our modes of intersubjectivity contain their own negation, which means for example that "to feel a part of the same set" also points at situations where one experiences that one does not feel part of the same group or set as the other.

Discussion

« 46 » Following the previous analysis, a number of issues deserve further discussion. First, we argue that our results, although obtained from experimental situations – planned first encounters –, are a first step in understanding more ecological contexts. Indeed, as previously highlighted, the description of our participants' lived experience is genuine because the explicitation interview, if conducted by an expert who fulfils its requirements, guarantees the authenticity of the descriptions. These descriptions are then as close as possible to the reference lived experience (vécu 1). Since many first encounters in everyday life are also planned (first medical appointment, job interview, first date, etc.), it is reasonable to assume that the

lived experiences that are associated with them share similarities with what we have described. This assertion would, of course, need to be checked, especially because the objectives pursued by people in everyday situations are obviously different from those participating in scientific research.

« 47 » Second, on the basis of our analysis, we argue that a sense of agency is a significant facet of the intersubjective experience, and is therefore key to understanding it. Agency is primarily the faculty of beings to perform actions, but it also points to a subjective judgment, a state or an experience that one initiates and controls an action, particularly an intentional, goal-directed action, regardless of whether one objectively initiated, or is responsible for, that action. This experience as of agency is
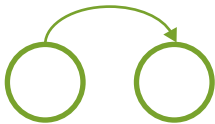
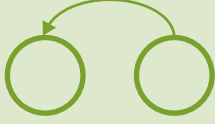| Mode of intersubjectivity		Example
	To (not) have something in common	"it's a bit like I had things in common with another person I'm talking to […] there is something in common that I can share"
	To (not) feel a part of the same set	"I feel like telling him about my own experience too […] to show him that we could be part of the same category of people in the world who like Bolivia"
	To (not) feel close to the other	"Benedict is watching with me […] I can't see her in the image […] she is next to me"
	To (not) identify oneself with the other	"I identified with her experience and through her I was sharing it […] it's as if I became her in a way and as if I was experiencing the same thing"
	To (not) identify the other with oneself	"it reminded me of the experience with my children"
	To (not) assign to the other	"with the smell I got confirmation that she was a smoker poor her"
	To oversee the interaction	"when I say the words I observe her reactions"

Table 4 • Identified elements for the category of modes of intersubjectivity.

176

called "the sense of agency" by Patrick Haggard and Baruch Eitam (2015). This sense of agency corresponds to what Yochai Ataria, Yair Dor-Ziderman and Aviva Berkovich-Ohana (2015) describe in their study on the phenomenological nature of the sense of boundaries in a long-term mindfulness meditator. They show that for this subject, under certain conditions, things happen "on their own," spontaneously, without the need for an agent who controls what happens, whether at the corporal level or at the level of thought. Our study specifically describes this subjective aspect, rather than objective information about agency. The sense of agency is structured by the opposition between feeling that one is being active and feeling that one is being passive. As revealed by our analysis, this duality between an active lived agency and a passive lived agency is partly pre-reflective. Indeed, according to the reports of our participants, while they tend to experience themselves as the agent of most of their internal experiences, they also sometimes experience themselves being acted upon/moved by events or entities.[3] One can, for example, compare the reports "I told myself don't even try you won't find it," "I imagine her at the meeting with these retired people" or "I look for a reason […] when he asked me this question because it's not normal" with "it's in my thoughts that it actually opens," "it surprised me […] it gave me energy actually" or "it reminded me of the experience with my children."

« 48 » The sense of agency is not the only significant element when it comes to subjectivity. In our study, we had many examples of reports describing experiences that were lived as an "I," but the content of which was directly derived from what the other was contributing. For instance, when a participant told us "she told me she was primarily interested in French to Spanish and to italian and by extension to Portuguese […] I see a map of Southern Europe […] as in books […] I see it centered on Corsica […] I see it from Gibraltar almost to Lebanon […] I see a map like those at school with language areas," his subjective experience was driven

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3| The philosophical question of whether one only experiences oneself being acted upon or is genuinely acted upon is beyond the scope of this article.

by the words of his interlocutor, as well as by his gestures, posture, etc. This can be seen as the basis of interpersonal relationships. In some specific cases, the intersubjective experience consisted in experiencing what the other person was experiencing. In another corpus of data, we obtained, for example, reports such as "I feel that something a bit weird is happening to him," "I think of the fear she herself had." What is important here is to distinguish these verbatim statements from the preceding ones by the way the participant clearly attributes to another person what she is experiencing, which thus does not belong to her. For instance, one of the interviewees of our other corpus told us

❝ so at that time indeed I feel fear […] but it is not mine […] I notice when it's my fear I don't have the same symptoms […] me when I am afraid I immediately feel pain in my stomach […] I physically feel when it's mine and when it's other people's fear […] I learnt gradually while working that some anxieties or fears that go through me are not mine […] and that it's them so at that time I do actually feel fear […] but it's not mine. ❞

« 49 » Through these examples, the question of the porosity of the boundary between the self and the other arises, as well as that of empathy conceived as an ability to perceive and to understand what the other is living. In social psychology, the relationship between the self and the other is echoed by the distinction proposed between alter ego and strict alter (Moscovici 2000): while one feels that one shares some characteristics with an alter ego, one feels different from the strict alter, whether because this alter differs on many external (alter from outside) or internal (alter from inside) aspects. There are thus two main modes of relationship, and the transition from one to the other can be a topic of investigation. We can reasonably hypothesize that these two types of perception of otherness do not constitute two discontinuous categories, but are rather the extremes of a continuum. Transitions as experience unfolds can therefore be gradual rather than always abrupt. Moreover, our data show that the subjective relationship with the other person is not only a question of distance, but can also be described with topological entities such as sets and shared features – with modes of intersubjectivity

such as "to (not) feel a part of the same set" or "to (not) have something in common." Our study therefore points to a variety of modes of intersubjectivity. This outcome is representative of a first-person approach, and could not have resulted from a third-person one. The typology we proposed is still hypothetical, and more research is needed to reach firmer conclusions. Interviews could, in particular, focus on micro-moments of transition between "feeling the other as similar to oneself" and "feeling the other as different from oneself." One could expect to observe gradual, although rapid transitions, as well as more abrupt ones.

« 50 » The intersubjective experience between two persons may involve not only them, but also third parties. Especially in situations where the boundary between the other and oneself seems to fade, the description (in the lived experience) of a third entity often seems to be meaningful. This entity may already be or become a component of the interaction, or not. For instance, when a participant told us "he spoke of Serbia […] it reminded me of Emir Kusturica's *Black Cat, White Cat* and the fanfare music that features in his movies […] we got onto Kusturica and his orchestra," the filmmaker and his music were then discussed by both people. This illustrates what Anika Fiebich and Shaun Gallagher call "joint attention in imagination" (Fiebich & Gallagher 2013: 577), i.e., the connection between two people via a third element, which can be a person or an object. Although joint attention usually refers to joint attention in perception, Fiebich and Gallagher's proposition goes beyond perception (as usually "joint attention" refers to "joint attention in perception") and involves

❝ the conceptual in the sense that two agents are jointly attentive towards a concept or an idea – our conversation about justice, for example, requires that we mutually attend to this concept and the conversation itself confirms that we do. ❞ (ibid)

In other situations, the third entity remains private to the interviewee's mind, as when one participant described how she imagined her nephew, who is in a coma, after the other person had mentioned a room where she was with other persons: "first I see my nephew Clément who was lying on his bed at the La

Tronche hospital and who was in a coma." In this case, this entity assists the subject in apprehending the interaction, but without being made explicit. To our knowledge, documenting these experiential processes had not been done before our study. This is a promising track to develop our knowledge of what it means to share an experience, in the sense of Stern's (2004) intersubjective matrix, i.e., the mental and physical space within which two people interact. It is likely that when a subject builds a new intersubjective matrix, one strategy she relies on consists in remapping past matrices, which connect to the new one thanks to the bridge created by the third entity described above. Such outputs of a first-person approach clearly differ in their take on internal processes and behaviors from third-person paradigms without access to subjective experience. This thus opens the door to relevant complementary perspectives (Lutz et al. 2001; Depraz, Gyemant & Desmidt 2017).

Future directions

« 51 » Analyzing the various experiential modes of intersubjectivity has been the target of the previous sections. We are currently looking for recurrent patterns of values of descriptive categories for the EMPs. For example, does the mode of intersubjectivity "To (not) feel a part of the same set" preferentially occur with mental images or bodily sensations? Does it relate rather to an active or passive sense of agency? Our preliminary analyses show that such regularities are present in our corpus. It would be interesting to put them in perspective with the notion of habitus, defined as a matrix of behaviors or thoughts by Pierre Bourdieu (1980), or as embodied and implicit social knowledge by Norbert Elias (Delmotte 2010). Given that both participants of each first-time encounter are available in our corpus, do we also observe similar patterns among them? As a preliminary result, the mode of intersubjectivity "To assign to the other" often seems to be associated with the presence of internal language.

« 52 » A second direction for future work consists in focusing on the diachronic structure of the lived experience of first encounters. Until now, our analyses have been

synchronous, in the sense that we have unearthed the experiential structure of micro-moments without looking at the antecedents or consequences of these moments. We now investigate possible diachronic ordering of values of descriptive categories and their unfolding in time. To this end, we complement each EMP with what we call a seed, i.e., a lived micro-event (described by the participant in her interview) that preceded this EMP and led to it. Two descriptors of the seed appear significant to us:

a   whether this event was observable or unobservable;

b   whether the agent(s) of the seed was/were A, A*, both A and A*, or neither A nor A* but someone else.

« 53 » Describing seeds brings unfolding and dynamics to the description of experience. It is meaningful when it comes to answering questions such as "why did A experience this specific EMP?" or "how did this EMP occur at that precise moment?" In the specific case of intersubjectivity, it deals with what causes two subjectivities to enter into interaction the way they do. Interestingly, the seed of an EMP can be another EMP.

« 54 » Overall, diachronic and synchronic individual patterns are equally interesting to study, as well as the analysis of synchronic experiences of dyadic interacting participants, and can provide complementary perspectives. They are together at the core of the micro-phenomenological approach, which especially focuses on the temporal fragmentation of the lived experience, identifying phases of activity and events triggering these phases. It is thus possible to study the unfolding of lived experience in time, which constitutes a particularly innovative and stimulating perspective in the field of intersubjectivity.

Conclusion

« 55 » In this article, we have proposed a typology of the micro-moments that constitute people's intersubjective experience during first encounters. We have identified, on the basis of experiential reports, various subjective modes of intersubjectivity, taking place in relation with various acts and an active or passive sense of agency. We have

since led other interviews about ecological encounters, especially between clients and therapists (physicians, nurses, psychotherapists…). The first analyses show similarities with planned encounters (in particular, we find the same acts and some of our modes of intersubjectivity) but also specificities related to the context and the finalized activity of the healthcare practitioners.

« 56 » Our results, and those that will be obtained from the future studies outlined at the end of the preceding section, raise the question of the possible generalization of the proposed typologies. Our results indeed derive from specific, planned, first encounters. Do they apply to encounters such as those between healthcare practitioners and clients, between employers and potential employees during job interviews, but also at school between teachers and students, or during a first date? An answer to this question should relate to whether the variety of experiential situations is much larger than what we witnessed in our interviews, or whether we circumscribed this variation despite the restrictions of our experimental setting. This depends partly on the size of the corpus of interviews – more interviews are more likely to exhaust the diversity of experiences –, and ours, with 24 interviews, is fairly large. Interviewing people from different cultures and of different ages, as we have done, also likely leads to a wider range of experiences and of their descriptions.

« 57 » Finally, it should be recalled that the micro-phenomenological approach is in no way restricted to first encounters, but can benefit most investigations in the humanities and social sciences. Properly listening to what subjects have to say about their experiences could and should be considered as one of the main gateways to the understanding of human cognition and behavior, beyond unjustified restrictions imposed by the dominance of third-person approaches. We therefore follow Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, for whom the

" concern is to open a space of possibilities in which the circulation between cognitive science and human experience can be fully appreciated and to foster the transformative possibilities of human experience in a scientific culture." (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1993: xviii-xix)

177

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179

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Open Peer Commentaries

on Magali Ollagnier-Beldame & Christophe Coupé's "Meeting You for the First Time"

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Conceptual Groundwork for the Phenomenology of First Encounters

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> Abstract • We aim to provide the basis for some conceptual work, designed to serve as a ground for future phenomenological investigation of first encounters. We argue that there is more than one standard by which an intersection ought to be regarded as *an encounter*. Hence, there are various notions of "first encounter," each of which deserves independent phenomenological inquiry.

« 1 » In their target article, Magali Ollagnier-Beldame and Christophe Coupé take a step toward a micro-phenomenological study of intersubjectivity. Using explicitation interviews, they study first-person experience of highly designed first encounters. The authors are well aware of some ways in which their study is limited: they do not purport to apply their findings to more natural encounters (§22). But they take the "inherent richness" of first encounters to hold the promise of "shedding light on intersubjectivity from a more general standpoint" (§20). In our commentary, we argue that as far as philosophical insight is concerned, the notion of "first encounter" is too coarse-grained. Addressing the plenitude of philosophical queries into intersubjective experiences will require a plenitude of fine-grained notions of "(first) encounters." Rather than using the conceptual work undertaken below as straightforward criticism, we offer it, and the methodology that governs it, as a basis for future inquiry.

Delineating "first encounters"

« 2 » On a busy day in the city we may come across hundreds of complete strangers. When do intersections with strangers constitute a first encounter? (Think of an eye contact, a gesture signifying "you go first," or a formal exchange of words.) Phrased in this way, the question of delineating "first encounter" seems quite pointless. What would be the philosophical point of drawing the line between first encounters and other intersections?

« 3 » There are, however, questions that may deserve philosophical attention. Let us briefly discuss two such (families of) questions:

A: How is it that another person's unique individuality (occasionally) bursts into our world?

« 4 » This question breaks down into a cluster of questions, including:

- Empirical questions such as: What is it that makes it initially possible for us to perceptually reidentify some person?
- Conceptual questions such as: What explains the gap between the transcendental intersubjectivity (or being-with-others), and being-with-some-person-S?
- And phenomenological questions such as: Given the way in which we cling to stereotypes while trying to make sense of the world, what sort of experience is associated with outstripping categorical expectation? Or: What is the lived experience of recognizing the unique individuality of some other person for the first time?

B: What is the lived experience of facing the opportunity to make a first impression (to present oneself from the ground up)?

« 5 » This question also has third-person counterparts, including: What are the typical differences in behavior characterizing opportunities for making a first impression? For the sake of the present discussion, however, we can focus our attention strictly on the two phenomenological questions as-