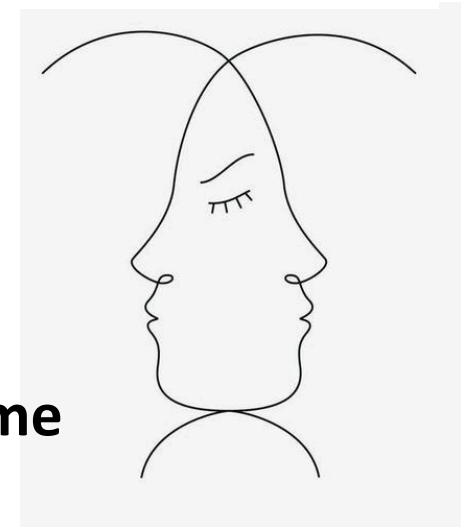


# **INTEGRATING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SUBJECTS: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC SCIENCE OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY**

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## EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW (1/3)

- ❏ First-person epistemology (Varela & Shear, 1999 ; Depraz, 2014)
  - ✓ Taking into account the subjectivity as the subject experiences it (vs. Not taking into account the subjectivity, *i.e.* third person point of view)
  - ✓ Challenge: produce a human science incorporating the subject point of view, as she/he can talk about it, in order to inform the researcher
- ❏ First-person methodology (Vermersch, 1994/2004)
  - ✓ The subject describes his/her personal experience
  - ✓ If the subject is the researcher: Radically first person methodology
  - ✓ If the researcher interviews someone else: Second-person methodology

## EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW (2/3)

- ❏ Method of data collection and analysis (Vermersch, 1994/2004 ; Petitmengin, 2006)
  - ✓ Allows guided retrospective introspections
  - ✓ Offers detailed and holistic descriptions of lived experience
- ❏ Inspired by
  - ✓ Piaget: theory of consciousness
  - ✓ Husserl: phenomenology
  - ✓ Gusdorf: affective/concrete memory theory

## EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW (3/3)

- Used to guide interviewees
  - ✓ To recall a past singular situation
  - ✓ To be aware of the pre-reflective implicit aspects of his/her experience (including the micro-dynamics of cognitive, affective and physical processes)
  - ✓ To describe them in detail



## EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW CONDITIONS (1/3)

### ■ Stages of the interview

1. Agreement of the person: communication contract
  - ✓ Set up a relation of trust, so that the subject agrees to put his/her lived experience into words.
  - ✓ Confidentiality, non-judgement, benevolence, respect
2. Specific moment
  - ✓ Precise and unique in time

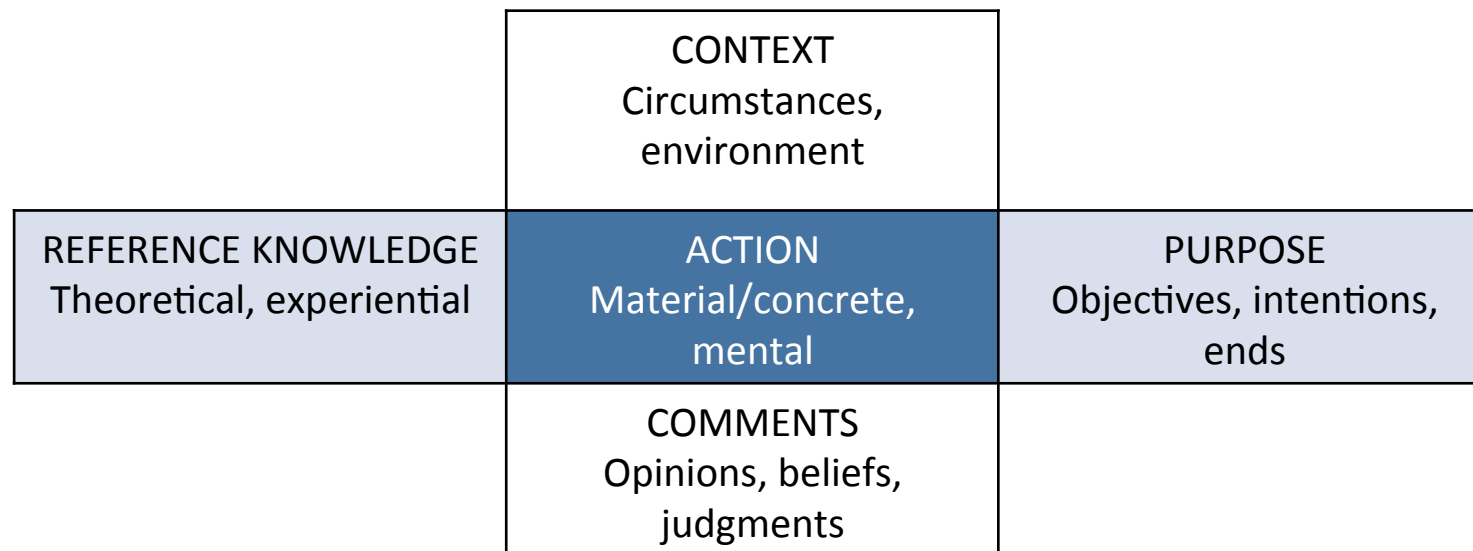
## EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW CONDITIONS (2/3)

### 3. Evocation/ embodied posture of speech (EPS)

- ✓ Presence to oneself, close contact with the past situation. Allows to explore step by step what has been lived.
- ✓ Not spontaneous: has to be provoked, guided through the prompts of the interviewer
- ✓ EPS Indications
  - Unfocused eyes
  - Slowing down of the delivery
  - « I » (vs. « you » or « we »)
  - Continuous present (vs. simple present)

## EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW CONDITIONS (2/3)

4. Explore the « how » (explicitation) and not the « why » (explication) of experience
  - ✓ Kind of reliving, in all its sensory dimensions



- ✓ Layers of experience: cognitive, sensitive, emotional, physical
- ✓ Fragmentation

## THÉSÉE PROJECT (1/2)

### The Thésée (Theseus) Project

- ❏ **T**heories and **E**xplorations of **S**ubjectivity and **E**xplicitated Experience
- ❏ Initiated in 2014 by M. Ollagnier-Beldame (ICAR lab., Lyon) and C. Coupé (DDL lab., Lyon)
- ❏ Research questions
  - ✓ What do two subjects live when they meet for the first time?
  - ✓ How do they experience intersubjectivity?
  - ✓ Cognitive, sensitive, emotional, physical layers of experience



## THÉSÉE PROJECT (2/2)

### The Thésée (Theseus) Project

- ❏ Focus on first encounters between “health care workers” and patients
  - ✓ What do healers and patients experience when they meet for the first time?
  - ✓ How are mutual intra- subjective layers of experience linked?
  - ✓ How do they co-construct the encounter?
  - ✓ Can we identify generic and idiosyncratic aspects in their respective lived experiences?

A descriptive approach, rather than an explanatory one

## CORPUS

- ❏ Explicitation interviews of 14 health care workers (various practices)
  - ✓ Physicians but also nurses, dentists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, psychologists, psychotherapists
  - ✓ Hospital or private practice
- ❏ On-going: pair interviews of psychotherapists and patients
  - ✓ The relationship is psychotherapists' prime material to restore mental well-being
  - ✓ Both sides of the relationship available to study intersubjectivity

## ANALYSIS: RESEARCHING INTERSUBJECTIVITY

- ✓ Confrontation
- ✓ Porosity of interpersonal boundaries
- ✓ Distance that connects therapist and patient
- ✓ Resulting tension

Makes it possible to encounter one another

“It is from the in-between between us – the one of intersubjectivity – that consistency comes to people”  
(Jullien, 2012: 65).

## EXPLORING THE STRUCTURE OF THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE

“The in-between is that through which all passes, happens, can unfold” (Jullien, 2012: 51)

Open, dynamic, productive, fertile space

- ✓ Each person makes the experience of himself/herself as a separate being;
- ✓ Each one experiences the other in her/his own being, through an echo arousing a feeling ranging from the most subtle to the most invasive,
- ✓ but also through the perception of an alteration in the intersubjective space.

Objective of this study: to bring out descriptive categories in order to highlight these 3 modes of experience of otherness.

## INTERVIEW EXTRACT - SOPHIA, PSYCHOTHERAPIST (1/2)

### PERCEIVING AN ALTERATION OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE SPACE

Psychotherapist (P)      he sits on the edge of the chair

P      I remember that there is a beginning of dialogue..... that I interrupt this dialogue... and I ask him how it is because I feel sth strange (*slowing down of the delivery*)... how it is.... for him NOW... how he feels because I feel sth strange

Interviewer (I)    ok what do you feel then?

P      mm... I feel.... mm mm I feel that sth is happening to him... which is... a bit strange ((she laughs))... I say to myself there's sth... which is not ok... there's sth which is not ok

I      ok it's sth maybe that you perceive with him... in his attitude

P      yes it's very physical again... it's his attitude his look.... his way of being into silence also.....

## INTERVIEW EXTRACT - SOPHIA, PSYCHOTHERAPIST (2/2)

### PERCEIVING AN ALTERATION OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE SPACE

P      yes I'd say these three factors his attitude his look his silence ((*verbalized in one breath*))

P      which are... different... which are different

I      different from?

P      ..... mm... from something... from a quiet silence I would say... as if there were a different texture of silence

I      and then the texture of silence there, how would you describe it?

P      ... .. mm he's here and not here

P      as if he was here and not here ... .. like a void... a silence which would be like a void

P      and for me silence is not this... well it's not necessarily like this... a silence which would be like a void... like an absence ((*urgency in the tone*))

## “THE INTERSUBJECTIVE MATRIX” HYPOTHESIS (STERN) (1/2)

Trying to understand the structure of this intersubjective space

In *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life* (2004), D. Stern postulates the existence of an intersubjective matrix:

“We are no longer the sole owners, masters, and guardians of our subjectivity. The boundaries between self and others remain clear but more permeable. (...)”

We live surrounded by others’ intentions, feelings, and thoughts that interact with our own, so that what is ours and what belongs to others starts to break down. (...)”

This continuous cocreative dialogue with other minds [and bodies] is what I am calling the intersubjective matrix.” (2004:77)

## “THE INTERSUBJECTIVE MATRIX” HYPOTHESIS (STERN) (2/2)

To what extent can we share the other's inner state?

How far is it possible?

How to confirm one's feelings?

What sensitivity or what kind of attention does it require?

One of the objectives of the Thésée project:

To open up an experiential path – researching from first person, subjective experience – in order to understand the structure of this intersubjective world.



## A MODELLING METHOD OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

Devised by Vermersch (2012) and Petitmengin (2001)

1. Separate descriptive statements
2. Identify the diachronic and synchronic structures of the descriptions
3. Bring out the specific descriptive categories of each experience of encountering
4. Identify the generic descriptive categories
5. Devise a generic model of lived experience of first encounter between a therapist and a patient

## CONCLUSION

### EXPLICITATION INTERVIEW AND TRANSPERSONAL RESEARCH

A very powerful research method to address transpersonal issues

- ✓ Allows to document the experience of people as they live it, in their own point of view
- ✓ Allows to access the invisible and non observable part of their experience
- ✓ In its different layers (cognitive, sensory, emotional)
- ✓ At the level of its micro-dynamic temporality

**Honoring human experience:** a very appropriate motto of explication interview

Thank you for your attention!

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