

The philosophy behind IPA

§ What is reality /objectivity?

§ What is a phenomenon?

§ Bracketing

§ Double hermeneutics

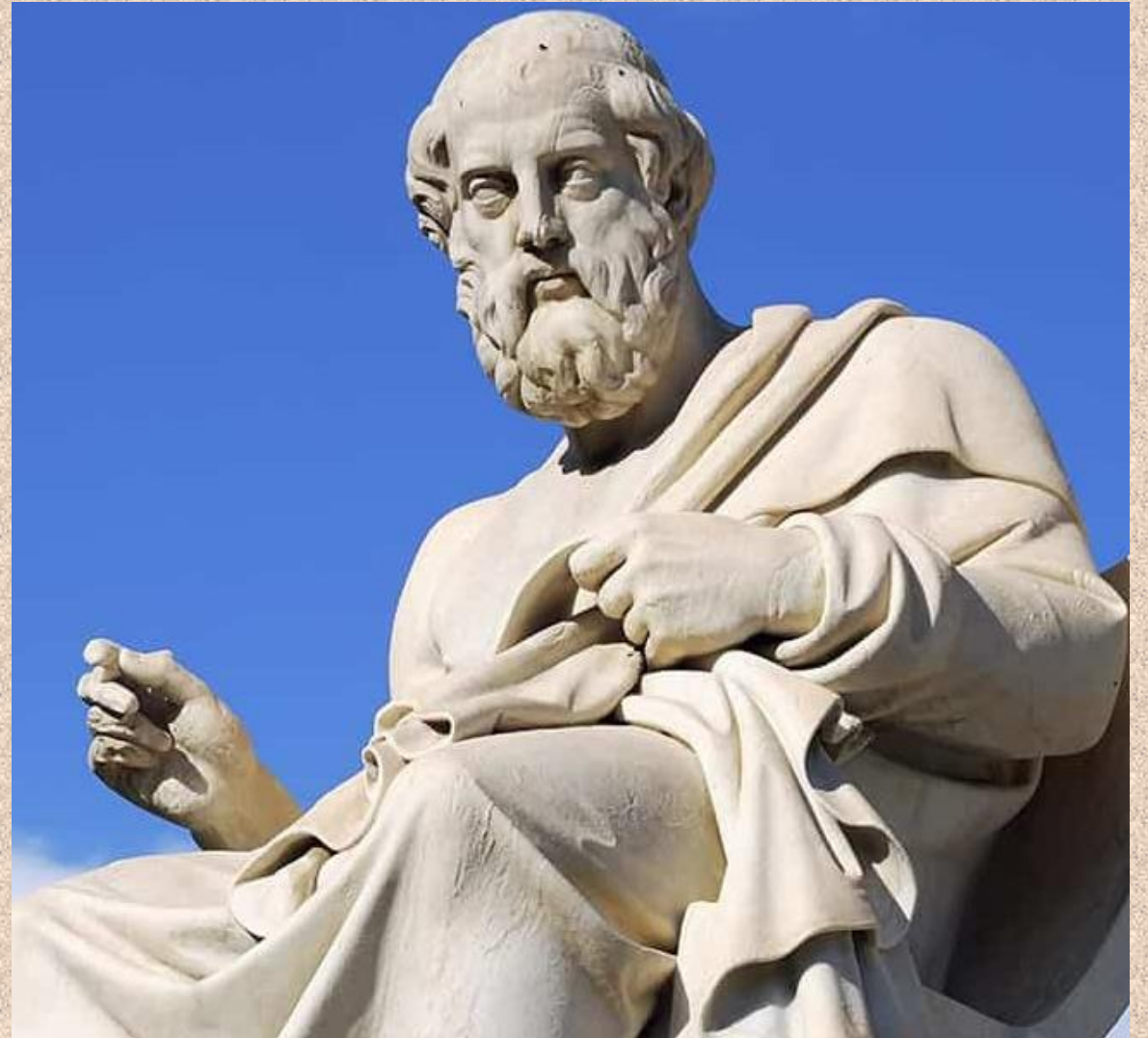
Why do we need to talk about this?

Background in phenomenological philosophy distinguishes IPA from other qualitative interview-based research methods



Does reality objectively exist?

Positivism - **Cartesian divide**:
There is a distinct difference
between the observer and the
observed (= subject and object)



Does reality objectively exist?

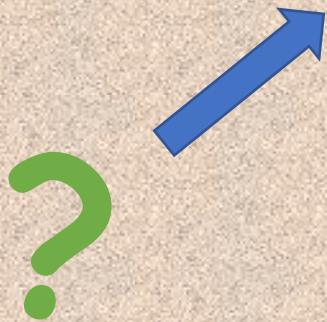


Philosophers in 19th and 20th century:
What do objects in our consciousness
say about the things themselves?



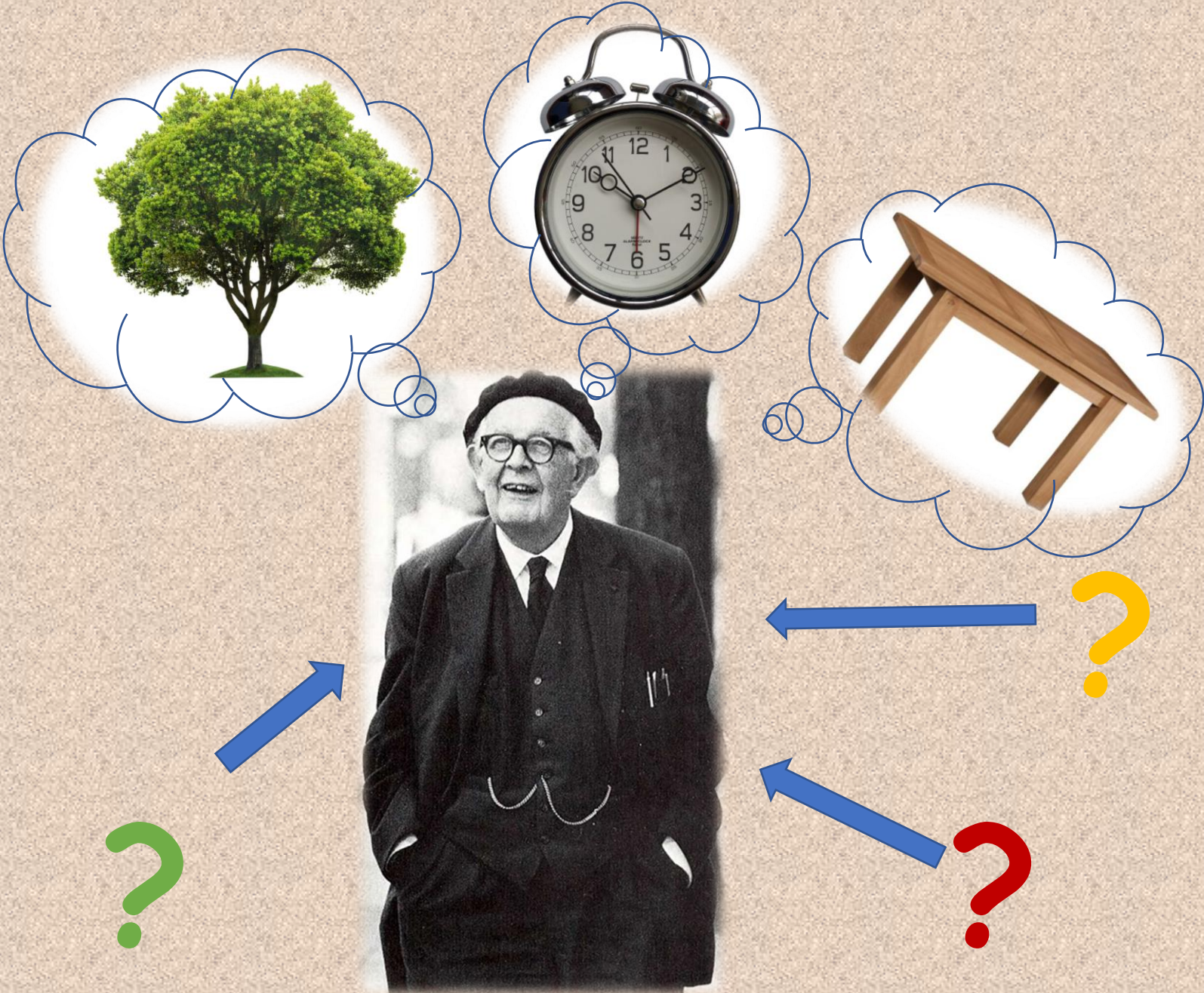
Constructivist paradigm: We can only
access reality as something that has
gone through our cognitive activity and
experience.

So what are we really researching?



Phenomena

(plural of "phenomenon")



Intentionality

Our consciousness is always related to an object.

= when we are conscious, we are always conscious **OF** something



Phenomenological reduction

- process of looking for an idea /mental image of a **phenomenon**
= an object held by our consciousness, image of which which is created from the conceptions we have about the object



In IPA, we are aiming to do this with the researched phenomenon.

< We don't claim facts, we talk about **phenomena!**

I don't say that what I see is objective reality, I witness it as it presents to me and describe it as such.

Objectivity in phenomenology and hermeneutics

- We can only access reality via our consciousness
- We are not able to remove ourselves from the world in order to observe „how things really are“



we always participate on the observed phenomenon in some way

- Therefore, the question whether objectivity /reality separate from us exists is irrelevant, because we are unable to find out.

Bracketting (epoché)

= a thought process in which the philosopher sets aside (= **brackets out**) their natural understanding of the world around in order to approach the phenomenon via phenomenological reduction

- we temporarily exclude our previous conceptions regarding the subject in order to focus on forming new stances that come predominantly from our research

Bracketting in IPA: How to?

We need to make repeatedly sure that all the themes in our research come from the data.

Possible ways how to do it:

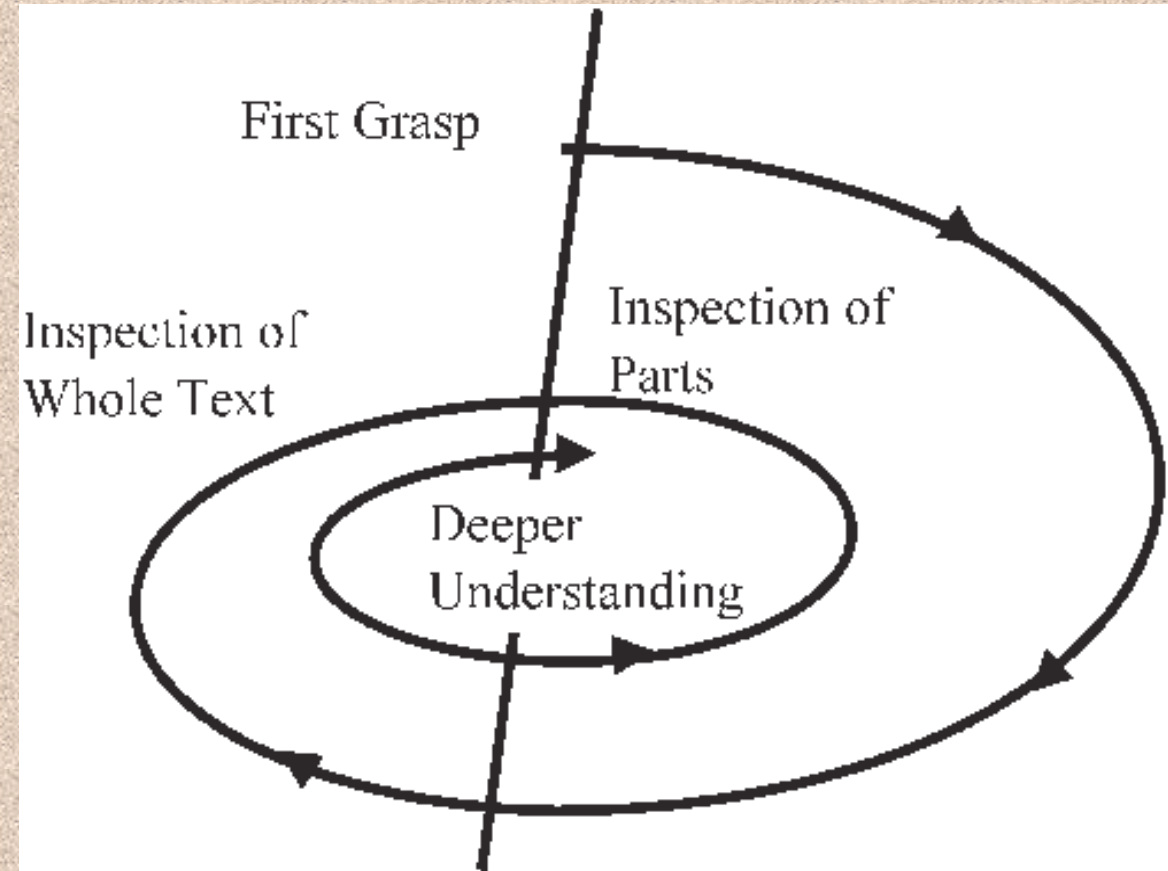
- write up your thoughts, conceptions and knowledge before the interviews
- find good examples for emergent themes in the data
- use participants' terminology

How do we make sense of reality?

- Without our previous conceptions, we wouldn't be able to understand the phenomena in the first place



- **Hermeneutic spiral**: using our previous conceptions about the phenomenon to create new ones
- **Insider's perspective** makes it possible for the researcher to approach the topic, respondents and the data.



Hermeneutics in IPA = double hermeneutics

- double hermeneutics: Participants are trying to understand their experience, researcher is trying to understand the phenomenon as experienced by the participant
- researcher is making sense from the world of the participant
- > two different researchers might get slightly different results from the same data

IPA hermeneutic levels:

