

# The philosophy behind IPA

- What is reality /objectivity?
- What is a phenomenon?
  
- Bracketing
- Double hermeneutics

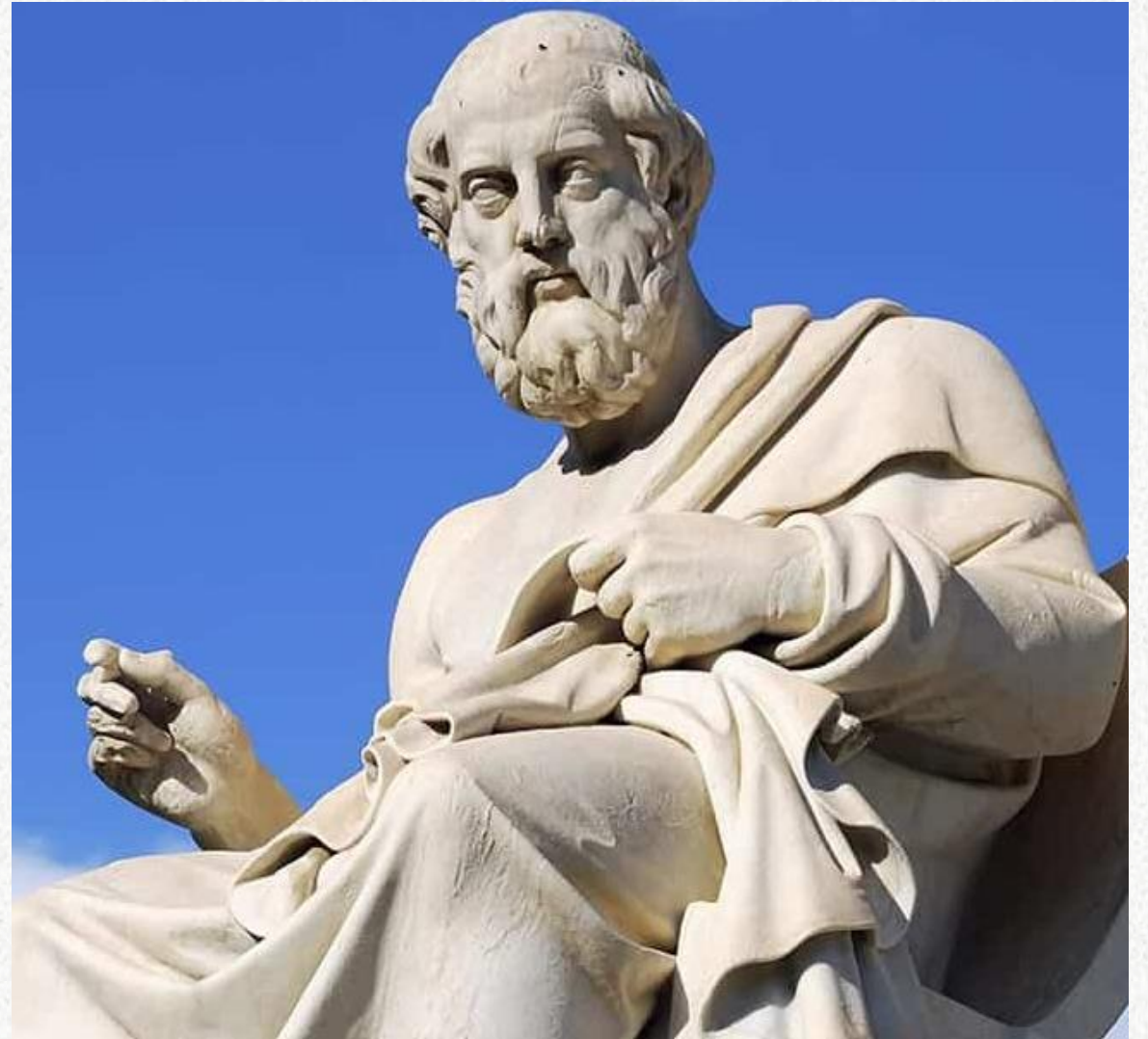
## Why do we need to talk about this?

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?

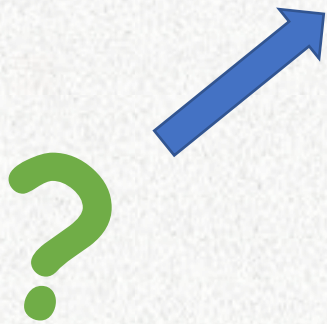


Philosophers in 19th and 20th century:  
What do objects in our consciousness  
say about the things themselves?



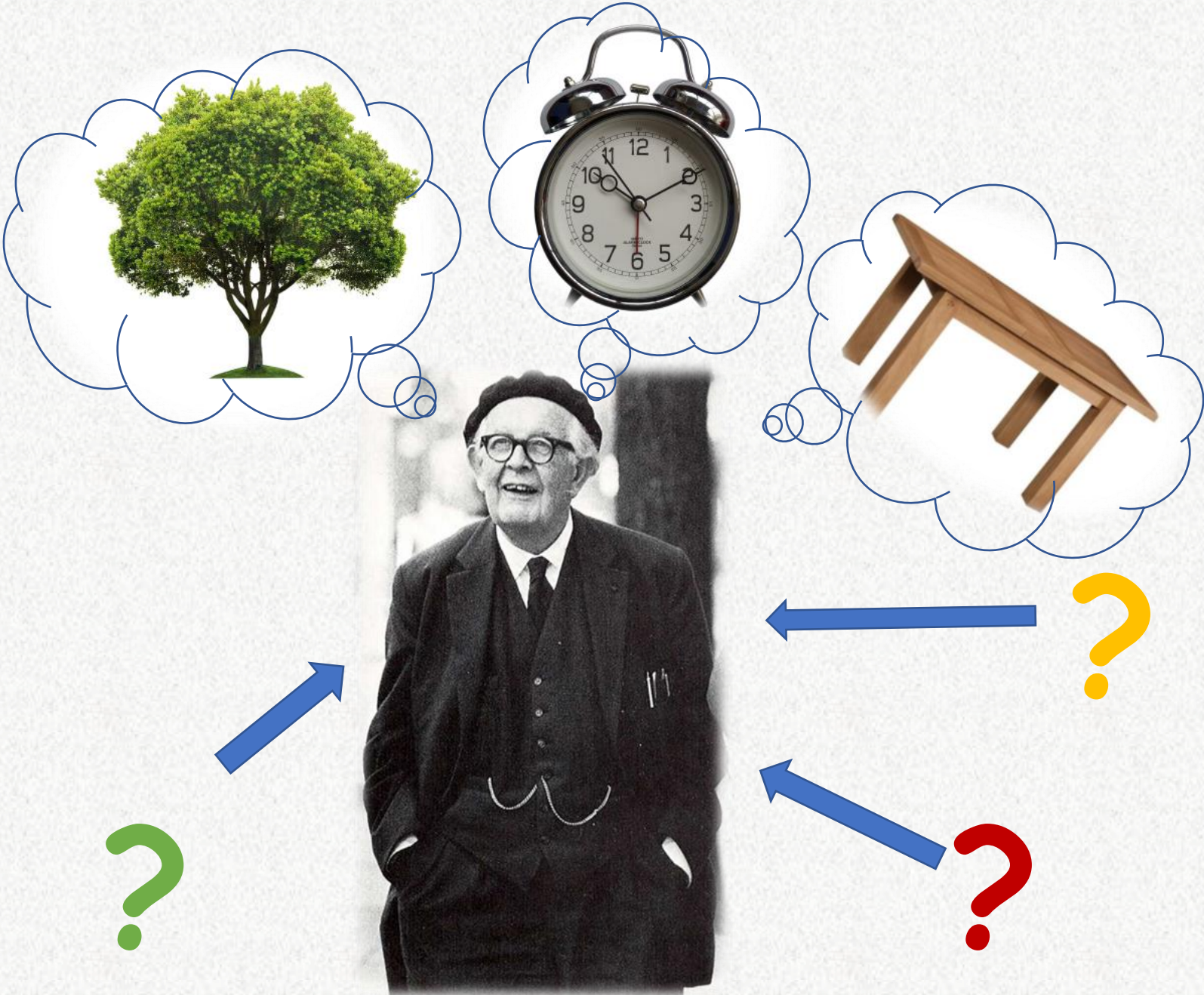
**Constructivist paradigm:** We can only  
access reality as something that has  
gone through our cognitive activity and  
experience.

**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 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.

# Bracketing (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



# Bracketing 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:**

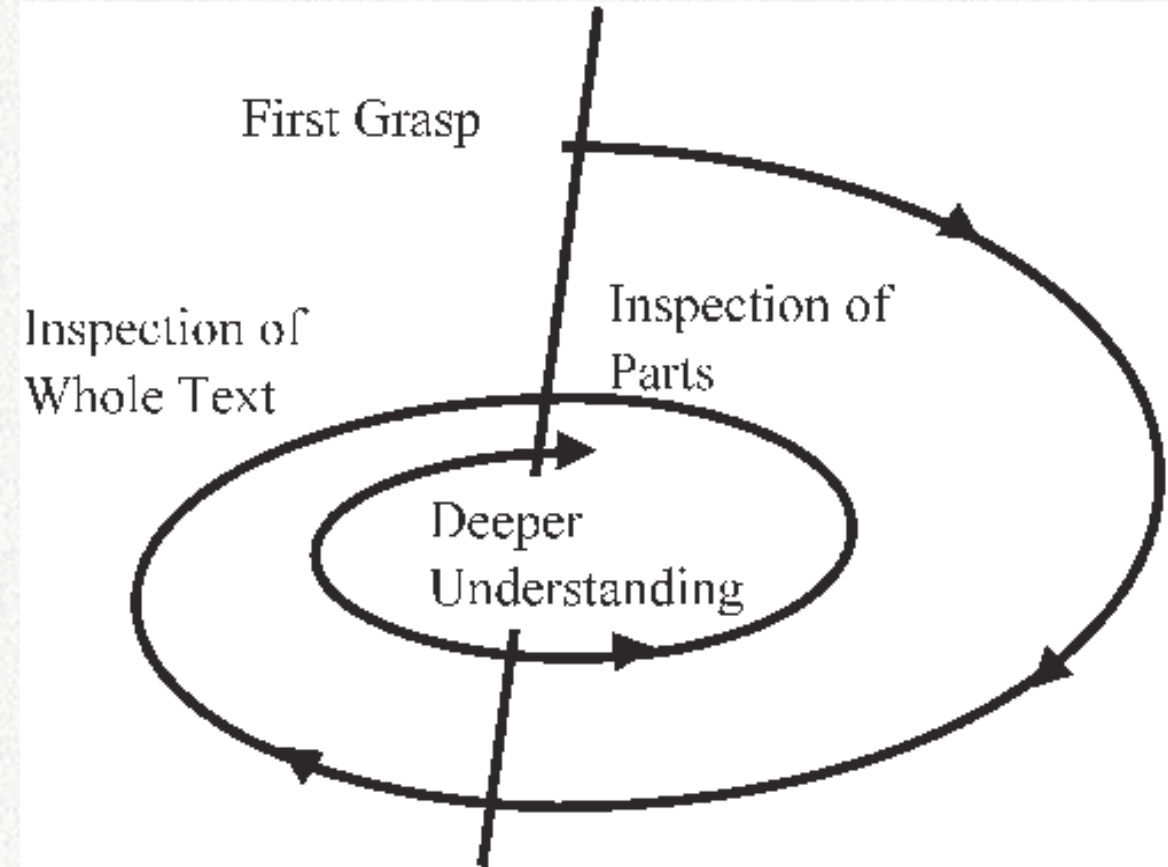
- write up your thoughts, conceptions and knowledge before the interviews
- find good examples for emergent themes
- use participants' terminology
- in case you are unsure, track all your interpretations back to the data

# How do we make sense of reality?

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



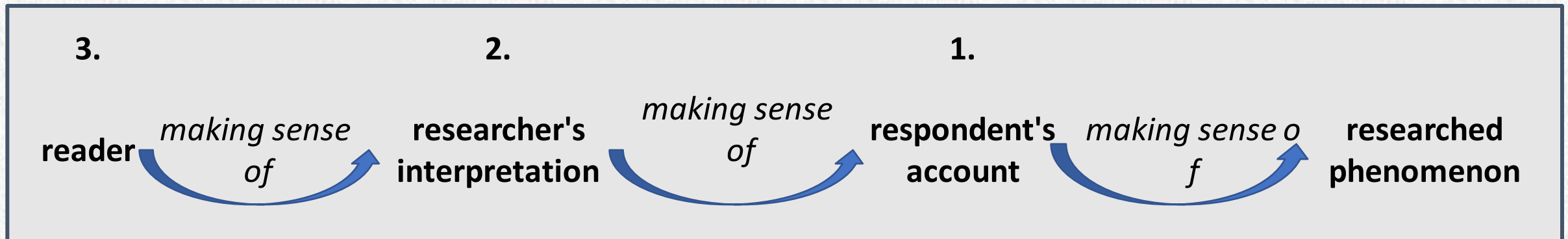
- **Hermeneutic spiral:** using our previous conceptions about the phenomenon to create new ones
- **Insider's perspective** makes it possible for the researcher to approach the topic, respondents and the data.



# 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:



Thank you!

# SCHRÖDINGER PLATES



**THEY'RE BOTH BROKEN AND NOT BROKEN  
UNTIL YOU OPEN THE DOOR**