SELF-REPRESENTATION BY AUTO-PORTRAIT IN RESEARCH INTERVIEWS¹

Amina Bensalah

The meanings expressed by the actions of the other are not necessarily the same as those which that other attributes to them: they never have more than the status of indications of the meaning intended by the other.

A. Schutz, *Collected Papers*.²

1. The research framework

Most research interviews deal with interactions that consist mainly in language production. The subjects are usually questioned on topics such as work, language, legacy, family, education, health, unemployment, etc... As for interviews which require from the subjects that they talk about themselves, they deal mostly with testimonies and life stories. The interviewee acts as a witness. The social researcher's aim when asking for these kinds of autobiographies, is mostly to account for a type of social change and not an individual story. Therefore, the interview is a device designed in order to produce speech that relates psychological and social facts. In that kind of situation, what is at stake is supposed to be "systems of representations" and "social practices" (Blanchet & Gotman 1992).

1.1. *The research data*

The interviews which we present in this paper have been used in a study of body image in adult and elderly patients (Morin & Bensalah 1997). They mostly consist of the comments produced by respondents while drawing their self-portraits. These interviews thus differ from the pattern described above in two distinctive features. First because they are a collection of control data made in order to be compared to those produced by brain injured, paraplegic or orthopedic traumatized patients (Morin, Perrigot, Pradat-Diehl, Robain & Bensalah, in preparation). Second, because the subjects were asked for

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² Traduction personnelle.

a drawing rather than for speech production. The interviews, 30 to 45 minutes long, were collected from eighty subjects 50 to 85 years old. They were asked to draw a self-portrait, the question being: "Are you willing to make a drawing that represents yourself?". Although the study required "self-portraits", the word "a representation of yourself" was used in order to give to the interviewees some liberty for interpretation, since they could understand representation either in a symbolic or in a literal sense.

1.2. Interview procedure

The collection of data for the diseased group was made by a neurologist interested in psychoanalysis and body image, C. Morin³. I collected the control group data myself⁴. The two data differ in some features. In the first case the subjects only received the instructions relative to the self-portrait and the drawing of a hand; the interviews were not taped. In the second case, the control group, the complete interviews were taped and the instructions were as follows:

- before the self-portrait and the drawing of the hand we asked the subject, in the following order: 1) to tell us if s/he does or does not like to draw; 2) to draw what they liked; and 3) to execute geometrical drawings [circle, square, cube, diamond].
- after setting the two principal tasks, we ascertained the subjects' laterality (hand-foot-eye), as well as that of their parents, siblings and children. Then we asked them to indicate the right hand of two different illustrations of silhouettes, one facing the front, the other the back.

The researchers expected these preliminary tasks to serve the following purposes:

- promoting contact and trust because we were anticipating reluctance or even refusals to draw a self-portrait;
- obtaining certain information about the subject (status, relationship to drawings);
- enlightening the analysis of the graphic and verbal production of the central task.

When approaching the future interviewees we deliberately used approximate formulations such as: "Would you agree to take part in an inquiry about drawing?" "We used that method so that the subject would not train him/herself at drawing during the time between the agreement and the interview, and that he/she would not be able to elaborate any representation of him/herself. We were looking for spontaneous drawings, made in the course of only one encounter, for both groups.

³ INSERM U158: Savoirs et pratiques dans le champ médical; histoire, sociologie, psychanalyse. Paris V.

⁴ During this research, I was supported by a grant from the association "Recherche et Partage".

The aim of the medical researcher was to compare the self-portrait and the hand drawing of the diseased group with those produced by the control group. At the beginning, I was only in charge of the collection of interviews of the control group. My own interest as a linguist in those data was only raised once they had performed the interviews.

1.3. *Objective of this study*

In this paper we shall only analyse the interviews of the control group. My interest was directed towards i) the various verbal reactions of the interviewees when asked to represent themselves, ii) the relation between two semiotic modes used, i.e drawing and discourse. The various modalities of the interviewees' reactions and the discrepancy that indirectly appeared between what they expected of a 'research interview' and the specific requirement to draw their self-portrait led me to question the research interview itself as an object of study.

A first analysis of the corpus has already given rise to an article regarding the analysis of the researcher/subject relationship (Bensalah 1996). At that time I looked first at the place of those interacting in this type of encounter (assigned places, outlined places). Secondly, using as my starting point different types of implications (common implications, implications brought about by the situation, implications constructed by the dialogue and implications shared by the community or arising from difference), I devoted an analysis to the first question of the protocol, "Do you like to draw?", and to its effect on the interaction as a whole.

2. Between the project and its realisation

Despite the fact that we had anticipated it, we were surprised by the nature of the reactions of numerous subjects which included surprise and even violence of a sort as shown by the following examples:

Example 1- Mme H.

A- pourriez-vous me faire un dessin qui vous représente?

H- oh, dites donc ! (troublée) CA VOUS ça vous êtes EXIGEANTE ! PAS du tout (rit aux éclats comme pour camoufler son émotion) CA vous avez des... non DIT'DONC (rit) /qui me représente...?!! ah ça j je n'sais pas ça / j' vois pas du tout (rit)

A- could you make a drawing that represents you?

H- oh, well I never! (troubled) WELL YOU well you are DEMANDING! NOT at all (bursts out laughing as if to hide her emotion) WELL you have some... no WELL I NEVER (laughs) / which represents me...?!! ah well I I don't know about that/ I really don't see (laughs)

Example 2- Mme J

A - *est-ce que vous pouvez essayer de faire un dessin qui vous représente?*
J - *c'est TROP, c'est TROP !*

A- can you try to do a drawing that represents you?
J- that's TOO MUCH, that's TOO MUCH!

Example 3- Mme S.

A- *et heu::: pourriez vous me faire un dessin qui vous représente?*
S- *ah::: Moi ??!!!! (voix dans un soupir comme surprise ou suffoquée) (5s)ÇA ALORS l à mais!*
(5s)

A- and em::: could you make drawing that represents you?
S- *ah::: Me??!!!! (sighing voice as if surprised or suffocated) (5s) WHAT A THING but! (5s)*

Sometimes the subjects, without reacting with outright violence, attempt to avoid carrying out the task by developing multiple negotiation strategies, as we see in the following excerpts:

Example 4- Mme C

A- *est-ce que je peux vous demander de faire un dessin qui vous représente?*
C- *qui me représente MOI? (oui) // à quel point de vue? (ton très calme)*
A- *qui vous représente//*
C- *alors là, je suis incapable/ ah non ça, je peux pas//*
A- *vous ne pouvez pas?*
C- *non/ parce que je ne peux pas me représenter//*
A- *c'est-à-dire?*
C- *ben c'est-à-dire que...? [kesvle] bon ben / une photo. mais ..(oui) oui une photo (oui) non, moi je saurais pas // (C, troublée, produit des énoncés peu compréhensibles).*

A- can I ask you to do a drawing that represents you?
C- which represents me MYSELF? (yes)//from what point of view? (very calm tone)
A- which represents you
C- well that, I'm incapable/ ah not that, I can't//
A- you can't?
C- no/ because I can't represent myself//
A- that's to say?
C- well that's to say that...? [kesvle] well then / a photo. but.. (yes) yes a photo (yes) no, me I wouldn't know how to// (C. troubled, produces some utterances which are unclear).

Example 5- Mme G

A: *Est-ce que vous voulez bien faire un dessin qui vous représente?*
G: *alors là, je ne vais pas être mal! //*
A: *pourquoi?*
G: *je n' sais pas/ je vous fais n'importe quoi/ ça va vous faire rire mais enfin... pour faire un dessin qui me représente/ je ne sais pas ce que..*
A: *C'est-à-dire?*
G: *je ne vois pas bien ce qu'on peut faire comme ça // je ne sais pas dessiner/ pour en faire un dessin qui me représente/ ça va être un peu difficile /JE N'PEUX PAS Madame, je ne sais pas//*

- A: would you be willing to do a drawing which represents you?
 G: well then. I won't half look bad!//
 A: why?
 G: I don't know/ I 'll do you just anything/ it'll make you laugh that's all...to do a drawing which representsme/I don't know what
 A: that 's to say?
 G: I don't really see what one can do like that // I don't know how to draw / to do a drawing representing me / that is going to be a bit difficult / I CAN'T Madame, I don't know how to//

These reactions, which came from both men and women, very quickly led the researcher to adopt a verbal or non-verbal behaviour which could be considered unorthodox by strict research interview criteria. This attitude was given concrete expression by behaviour expressing empathy. For example she showed great interest in everything the interviewees said to her by relaunching the conversation around what they had told her of their lives, even if it was not directly relevant to the task.

It was the experience and knoweldge gained throughout the various interviews (inter-interviews) that taught her that adopting an attitude of this sort (not only an enunciative but also a perlocutory effect) would lead the interviewees to feel "morally obliged" to meet her demands. The non-verbal "seduction" behaviour which takes place during the interviews (facial expressions, nodding of the head, interjections expressing admiration, verbal games, laughter) gives (gift / counter-gift) the interviewees a chance to talk in exchange for what was asked of them (a sort of compensatory exchange) (Goffman 1974)

As a result, after having expressed their refusal, the following formulations emerge:

- 1) *je n'veux pas dessiner, c'est pour vous faire plaisir*
 - I don't want to draw, I'm only doing it to keep you happy..
- 2) *je n'ai pas envie de me représenter m'enfin c'est parce que c'est vous*
 - I don't wish to draw myself but well just because it's you..
- 3) *c'est pour vous aider*
 - it's to help you..
- 4) *enfin, si ça peut aider la recherche/ bon, si ça peut vous rendre service*
 - well, if it can help with the research, okay if it'll be of help to you...
- 5) *je vais le faire pour pour enfin ne pas dire que je ne veux pas le faire*
 - I'll do it so so well so as not to say that I I don't want to do it...

The many questions and relaunchees, unforeseen in the enquiry but nevertheless developed in one or another encounter, consisted in offering a chance to talk from which explanatory and justificatory pieces of narrative emerged. These symbolic chances, created by the discourse, can be analysed as forms of "constraint-contracts" which have the effect of binding together the interviewer and the interviewee within the space of the encounter. It is as if, by volunteering pieces of narrative without being asked, the interviewees participate in the creation of a framework for the interpretation of their drawings. The subjects do not simply reply to request by offering the "bare" facts, but equally endeavour to produce explanations and justifications which put forward their

point of view. Such a behaviour has already been observed in situations where people are asked to talk about themselves (Bensalah & Virolle 1992; Carcassonne 1997).

3. Inter-interview knowledge and its effect on the survey

At another level, it can be said that, for the researcher, the inter-interview knowledge which inevitably built up from one interview to the next, transformed the place and the role which were assigned to the complementary tasks at the outset. Thus, instead of serving only to provide a framework, to win the subjects' confidence or to obtain from them information relative to their rapport and ability with regard to drawing, these tasks enabled her to feel more at ease on the one hand and became a "way of approaching" the subjects on the other.

Between the project and its realisation a transformation takes place. The activity of the enquiry is a working space where it is not possible to pretend that the researcher is still the same during the first, the eighth or the umpteenth interview. Preceding interviews and the behaviour of the subjects have an effect on subsequent interviews. The co-construction of the survey induces a transformation in the interviewer whose listening is modified. The interviewer takes into account the interpretation of the tasks by the interviewees.

This change of attitude alters, in part, the genre "research interview". If in general the researcher's role obliges him/her to be distant, that is to say "neutral", the dynamics of the interaction modify this "neutrality" (Bres & Barberis 1989). Even if s/he does not meet the same person from one interview to the next, for the interviewer something is built up within the intertextuality of the interviews which can be said to be comparable to that which takes place within the intertextuality of interviews co-produced with one person, such as, for example, clinical interviews. However, if this evolution and this change take place on the part of the interviewer, the "enquiry" genre always presupposes, on the part of the interviewee, relatively similar expectations: Those of the enquiry, the poll, etc.

The implicit shared knowledge relative to the research genre, and the interpretation which is made of the subjects' reaction when a self-portrait is requested of them, allows us to say that a reaction of refusal, shifting, negotiation is due to a discrepancy between a certain (ritualised) expectation and the request itself. The affective burden which the act of representing oneself in a self-portrait supposes seems to go against the expectations of what was presented at the outset as an "enquiry", as shown by the following example :

Example 6- Mme S

A : Est-ce que je peux vous demander un dessin qui vous représente ?

S : Non, non, pas de dessin ! pas de dessin ! (pleurniche) comment me représenter ?

A : qui vous représente //

S : Si j'avais su je ne serais pas venue ! !

A : May I ask you to make a drawing that represents yourself?

S : No no! no drawing! No drawing! (snivelling) How could I represent myself?

A : That represents yourself...

S : Had I known that, I would not have come!

The negotiation which is established between the researcher and the subject, at this point in the encounter, reveals a change of the subject's point of view. This change concerns the genre itself in which the verbal interaction takes place: "the research interview". If we assume that most of the subjects (perhaps all of them?) have an intuitive, socio-discursively shared (Charaudeau 1983) ability to identify the research interview genre, we can understand their reaction to the request of a self-portrait. Such an intuitive ability may be related to what Schutz had in mind when he wrote: "In our everyday life and at all times, as humans, we have at our disposal a reservoir of knowledge which we use as a scheme of interpretation for past and present experiences and which also determines our anticipation of what is to come" (Schutz 1987: 205).

Furthermore we can ask ourselves whether in today's society most individuals do not differentiate between the rituals of research interviews and those of clinical interviews, be it in a more or less nebulous (considered) way. Thus they know that drawing, for example, can be a way of testing the personality, psychology etc. of an individual. Given this, a request during a research interview, not only for a graphic production but also for a drawing which represents them (a marginal and circumscribed production) seems to them "misplaced" and intrusive.

Consequently, the verbal and non verbal reactions to this task implicitly call into question the genre "research interview". This interpretation is confirmed if we consider the behaviour of the hemeplegic and orthopaedic subjects. When asked to carry out the same task they did it without reluctance. As if such a request was to be "expected" or at least possible within a clinical framework. Within the health environment of the hospital, the relationship of dependence which the patient feels vis-à-vis the doctor (apart from the effect linked to the relationship of authority) alongside the probable interpretation: "what is being asked of me forms part of my overall care", explains, without doubt the fact that this demand is not called into question. Equally, the fact that, within this framework the patients are "identified" individuals, draws this situation closer to that of a clinical interview. Hence, it is the framework and the socio-discursive genre in which the encounter takes place which, at least in part, endows the request with one or another meaning and induces one or another reaction (Goffman 1991).

In the situation in which they are faced with a request for a self-portrait the subjects seem to feel as if they have gone from being "anonymous individuals" taking part in a research interview, to being "given", "identified" subjects taking part in a clinical interview. A question relative to the methods of delimiting and defining the two types of interview can therefore be raised: how are the differentiation criteria defined and by whom? The researcher or the subjects?

When interpreting our data, should we or should we not take into account this implicit interpretation made manifest by the subjects' reaction? As a consequence, it is now clear that the use of a complementary task was not to anticipate and avoid reactions of refusal regarding the request for a self-portrait. Furthermore the facility with which most subjects spoke of themselves, often revealing "intimate" details which were not requested, compared to their difficulty and reluctance to represent themselves in a drawing reinforces this interpretation.

4. I said to myself: “What does this lady want?” : The interpretation of the task of self-representation by the subjects themselves

The task of representing oneself was at first interpreted as having to draw one's body. Be it the portrayal of one's body “at this moment” in the here and now of the interview, of one's body in an image lost in time, of one's body as one would like it to be or simply of a body in general. Thus seventy subjects interpreted the task literally as having to draw a self-portrait, which they either did or did not do. Once this interpretation was fixed upon, we saw numerous questions arising in the discourse. Here are some extracts:

Example 7- Mme Sa

Sa: je me dis: qu'est-ce qu'elle veut la dame? /elle veut que je me reproduise comme je me vois à peu près / ou alors est-ce qu'elle me voit dans un personnage qui m'est cher si vous voulez heu:: / que je représente mm::: certaines parties de l'ami ou je n'sais pas ou une sportive, ou une enfin non //j'sais pas /je comprends pas très bien ce que je dois faire là//

Sa: I said to myself: what does this lady want? /she wants me to reproduce myself as I see myself more or less / or well does she see me in someone who is dear to me if you like huh::: / that I represent mm::: certain aspects of the friend or I don't know or a sportswoman, or a well no// I don't know/ I don't really understand what I have to do here//

Example 8- Mr OZ

OZ: un dessin qui me représente?. En tant qu::: 'être hum... enfin en tant qu'individu ou en tant que:: (A acquiesce) oui en tant qu'individu // vous voulez dire, qui me représente? alors (ce serait?) c'est pas un dessin/ c'est c'est c'est l'image d'un/ bon/ c'est un livre/ je je je vois ça/ je je considère que::: c'est un peu ça/ j'aime beaucoup la lecture et je passe passerais beaucoup de temps à lire si j'en avais le le le temps.(hmhm) heu :::oui //

OZ: a drawing which represents me?. As::: someone hum... I mean as an individual or as::: yes as an individual // you mean to say, which represents me? well (it would be?) well not a drawing / it's it's it's the image of a /well/ it's a book / I I I see that / I I think that::: it's a bit like that/ I like reading very much and I spend I would spend a lot of time reading if I had the the the time for it. (hmhm) huh :::yes //

Example 9- Mr T

*A: est-ce que vous voulez bien faire un dessin qui vous représente?
T: ça c'est un truc que j'ai jamais fait ça / je ne me suis jamais dessinée / j'ai pas fait d'autoportrait // c'est un autoportrait que vous voulez en fait ?
ça demande réflexion (silence) // c'est pas un dessin compliqué / enfin j pense encore que (silence) un dessin qui mreprésente? (silence)// (...) j'essayerais de me représenter par une voiture //*

A: could you do a drawing which represents you?

T: That that's a thing I've never done that / I have never drawn myself / I have never done a self-portrait // it's a self-portrait that you want is it?

T: that needs some thought (silence) // it's not a complicated drawing / well I still think that (silence) a drawing which represents me? (silence)// (...) I'll try and represent myself as a car //

These different reactions elicit several interpretations:

- they aim at diminishing the emotional burden brought about by the task;
- they negotiate, by explicitly developing explanations and evaluations, the right not to have to carry out the task;
- they frame, through their own evaluations and discursive mitigators, the interpretations that the analyst could make of the drawing⁵;
- finally quite simply they offer this discourse as a substitute for the drawing.

5. Discourse, drawings and self-representation

A first issue is the fact that many subjects justify their refusal by their non-mastery of drawing. This justification is a true one for many subjects but not for all of them, given that a certain number of them do practice drawing. Nevertheless, in the research situation, the drawing practitioners do refer to their difficulty in doing a self-portrait just as the others and in practically the same terms.

A second issue concerns the status of discourse compared to drawing. Would speaking about oneself be more anonymous than portraying oneself in a drawing? Let us only note that no subjects showed reluctance towards being taped. Do the subjects feel less personally involved when they leave their voice or their words on a tape recorder than when they leave graphic marks on a sheet of paper?

The discourse and the words exchanged appear as a sort of mask which implicated the subjects to only a small extent. Proof of this lies in the fact that it is through their discourse that subjects reveal intimate details. Almost as if discourse, apart from its everydayness, constitutes a sort of barrier which does not reveal the "me" but only the social "self" (the self?).

It is doubtlessly due to this contrast that the request for a self-portrait can be considered intrusive. It reveals all and calls for the unveiling of an image, of a portrayal which, as soon as it is on paper, retains its definitive form. One has the feeling that, hidden behind this discourse, the subject was suddenly called to show his or her body within the social space. Hence, the subject is disturbed by the emergence of this task during the enquiry, giving rise to the following reactions:

Example 10: Mr B

A - est-ce que vous voulez bien faire un dessin qui vous représente?

B- oui oui qu'est-ce que vous voulez qu'j vous dise// me représenter/ remarquez j'ai pas bien compris la question // ça veut dire quoi?/ j'avais pas QUAND M ÊME pas vous faire mon portrait/?/c'est::j vous connais pas assez./ (inaudible)/ c'est:: c'est quand m ême difficile un portrait.

⁵ In producing negative evaluations of their drawings, the subjects hope that this will be taken into consideration in our analyses.

A- Are you willing to do a drawing which represents you?

B- yes yes what do you want me to say to you// represent myself/ mind you/ I haven't quite understood the question// what does it mean?/ I'm not going to do you my portrait ALL THE SAME /?/it's::: I don't know you well enough./ (inaudible) / it's:: all the same a portrait is difficult.

Example 11: Mr L

A: *est-ce que vous voulez bien faire un dessin qui vous représente?*

L: *qui me représente?(hm) UN DESSIN QUI ME REPRESENTE? (...)ABSOLUMENT pas/ Je suis IN-CAPABLE.*

A: *qu'est ce qui vous paraît difficile?*

L: *ça ne me paraît pas difficile, ça me paraît imPOSSIBLE, je suis incapable de faire un portrait de moi //ABSOLUMENT INCAPABLE*

A: *vous ne voulez pas essayer?*

L: *horreur du ridicule !!*

A: *mais personne ne le saura = je suis / seule =*

L: *= Si ! 'VOUS! /*

A: are you willing to do a drawing which represents you?

L: which represents me? (hm) A DRAWING WHICH REPRESENTS ME?

(...)ABSOLUTELY not/ I'm IN-CAP-ABLE.

A: what seems difficult to you?

L: it doesn't seem difficult to me, it seems imPOSSIBLE, I am incapable of doing a portrait of myself// ABSOLUTELY INCAPABLE

A: you don't want to try?

L: a horror of looking ridiculous!!

A: but no one would know = I'm / on my own =

L: = yes! 'YOU! /

The contrast between drawing and discourse can equally be backed up by the fact that, for example, certain subjects evoked as evidence the fact that you cannot “restart your drawing” that you cannot “erase”⁶.

1 - Mme S - *Je n'ai même pas une gomme alors!*

1 - Mrs S - Well I don't even have an eraser!

2 - Mr. P - *Bon // bon, comme on n'a pas le droit de corriger .. (sourir)//*

2 - Mr P - Well // well, as we don't have the right to correct it .. (sigh) //

even though none of them (of us) has the same attitude towards discourse. When we speak and we make mistakes, either in form or in content, we reformulate without

⁶ Even more than an explicit discourse, the absence itself of a request shows that this common assumption is being made. Note: it is interesting to see that this “censure” which Mrs S and Mr P point to, is not the result of an explicit instruction. One like the other postulates that it is culturally “evident” within the framework of a “test” situation. The actualisation not only of Mrs S's “eraser” but also of Mr P's “because” and “duty”, do not even need to link up to a present or even a past discourse in the interlocation. Here the linking up is to cultural knowledge which is in place and which is extra-textual. We cannot say that this meaning is located in “because”: it is in the “space of signification”, in the movement itself allowed by this “because” in relation to what is exterior to it.

feeling that we have broken a rule; on the contrary! Botching, false starts, modifications, lapses and contradictions are essentials of discourse. Thus, we can say that the violence of the task is linked, in part, to the fact that it imposes itself as a “monosemic” product which does not contain the multiple facets which the subjects have within themselves, not only in public but also in private.

Through discourse, on the contrary, the speakers have the opportunity to modalise, to modify what they say, to contradict themselves, to heighten and above all to be able to use the impersonal “one” and to reiterate the discourse of others (discours doxique). The speaker therefore at least has the feeling of safeguarding his or her “profound self”. It could even be said that false starts, repetitions, hesitations, ellipses, anacolutha are all necessary speech events which have as their function to protect the “vulnerability of the self”.

6. The circulation of common knowledge

It is the multiple interpretations that the subjects reveal, relative to “the violence” which is imposed upon them - all be it indirectly- not to “erase” or “restart” their drawings, etc., which allows us to say that by their reaction, the subjects push us to question ourselves and to question our theoretical apparatus. In effect what is the person who requests and analyses the self-portraits looking for? What truth does s/he want to reveal regarding the representations that subjects might have of themselves, especially when the latter show themselves to be reluctant to produce a drawing.

What is this presupposition from which we start in order to consider the production of a drawing independently of the discourse which accompanies it? There is indeed a presupposition here, an implicit on the part of the researcher. What is the theoretical and cultural knowledge which forces the subject into the production of a single drawing without restarts or modifications? What is the theoretical and cultural knowledge which underlies this attitude and which seems to say: for a drawing to be “the true” representation of the self it must be done “straight off” (spontaneously?) and must not be either rubbed out or recommenced? Would it be that when faced with the fleeting nature of constitutive meaning (Grunig & Grunig 1985) in verbal discourse, the researcher attempts to “grasp the trace” which would reveal the hidden face, the profound being?

Could it, to a certain extent, be our own feelings of helplessness as researchers or even simply as human beings that induces us to attempt to believe that within this “trace” we have a hold of something concrete which can finally provide some opposition to the fleeting nature of meaning?

However, what is interesting in this situation is to see that this attitude is shared by the two parties: the researcher and the subjects. Here we are indeed dealing with common cultural knowledge, since, as we have seen, rare are the subjects who ask for an eraser or who ask to begin their drawing again. Furthermore, in the cases where they do so, it is in order straightaway to make the point that they are not allowed to erase or to begin again. Thus, here there is a belief, a common meaning (which remains to be clarified) shared by both “ordinary popular psychology” (Bruner 1990, sense) and the scientific researcher.

This is why this enquiry throws back to the researcher questions relative to the status of “theoretical principles” which s/he makes use of at the analysis stage, inviting the researcher to question his/her theoretical implicits and his/her beliefs, even if they have the status of theoretical hypotheses. It appears to me that the circulation and the evolution of “scientific knowledge” between the laboratory and the outside world, shown by J. Bruner in *Acts of Meaning*, is very well illustrated in these interviews. In fact, indirectly it is the question of the status of what we call a “theoretical hypothesis” and what we call “belief” which is at the heart of this questioning.

7. The bodily anchoring of discourse, of the voice

Using the “principle of generosity” (this intention being bestowed upon the subjects), another interpretation would be to say that, through their agitation, their refusal and indignant exclamations when faced with the task of producing a self-portrait, the subjects indirectly ask us the following questions:

- Represent oneself, but how? Through an illustration of a real body or a symbolic one?
- When and under what circumstances do we think of ourselves as a physical body?
- How can the multiplicity of the “self” be expressed in a fixed outline? Or how can one inscribe the multiple meanings of self and of the self changing in an encounter with another?
- To picture oneself in a drawing which would be the portrayal of oneself? Is this not to find oneself confronted with the absurd reality of cutting the body from speech and does this not go against the logic itself of the multiple strata of meanings which enable one to verbalise hence to speak of oneself? From whence emerges the difficulty in separating the forms of the voice which speaks from the discourse which mitigates and equally the difficulty in separating a discourse which only has a bodily anchorage and a body which, in its turn, is enveloped in the discourse.

What this experiment in the illustration of the body seems to show is that the human body is not something which is fixed, once and for all, in the order of physical reality but it is an image which is ceaselessly rethought, renewed by verbalisation, according to particular circumstances (Merleau-Ponty 1945). It is a narrative which is constructed throughout the length of a story.

The following extracts illustrate these questions:

Example 12- Mr Ba

A - est-ce que vous voulez faire un dessin qui vous représente?

Ba - on se représente mal soi-même

A - mais vous voulez bien essayer?

Ba - on a trop l'habitude de se voir dans un miroir, de se voir passer

A - do you want to do a drawing which represents you

Ba - one represents oneself badly oneself

A - but you are willing to try?

Ba - one is too used to seeing oneself in a mirror, to seeing oneself passing by.

Example 13- Mme G

A -oui.// vous, vous comprenez quoi quand je vous dis 'un dessin qui vous représente'?

G - Je n'sais pas moi, je n'sais pas!

A - vous avez pensé à autre chose?

G - oui, une personnalité, qui représente la personnalité de quelqu'un

A - vous pensez à quoi, par exemple?

G - aucune idée/ Je n'sais pas/ pour certaines personnes qu'on connaît bien, je suppose qu'on peut // ce n'est pas facile de toute façon de dessiner une qualité

A - oui, vous pensez dans ce sens là//

G - oui// une qualité ou un défaut/ quelque chose qui caractérise VRAIMENT la personne

A - oui, vous faites un dessin qui vous représente /

G - oui// Je n'sais pas/ Je n'peux pas faire quelque chose de personnel //je peux faire un dessin mais qui représente n'importe qui ! //

A - yes // you, you understand what when I say to you 'a drawing which represents you'?

G - I don't know me, I don't know!

A - you thought something else?

G - yes, a personality, which represents somebody's personality

A - you are thinking of what, for example?

G - no idea/ I don't know/ for certain people that one knows well, I suppose that one can // it isn't easy anyway to draw a quality

A - yes, you're thinking in that sense//

G - yes// a quality or a fault/ something which REALLY characterises the person

A - yes, you do a drawing which represents you /

G - yes// I don't know/ I can't do something personal // I can do a drawing but one which represents just anyone! //

Example 14- Mr C

A: est-ce que vous pouvez faire un dessin qui vous représente?

C: ah non, / ah ça je sais pas faire (rire) /

A: mais à votre goût/ comme vous voulez,/vous n'êtes pas noté (rire)//

C: le probl ème n'est pas là (rit bcp) je sais pas/ m'enfin je sais pas me dessiner moi/ me représenter moi /avec un dessin/ je sais pas le faire! //

A: vous faites comme vous voulez/ à votre manière/ (C rit) ça vous paraît difficile?

C: oui oui ça me paraît difficile/ non pas dans le dessin/mais dans la projection si vous voulez de du d'une image// hein /Je pourrais styliser quelque chose hein / mais là vraiment je je sais pas/ je vais le faire pour pour enfin ne pas dire que je je ne veux pas le faire mais je je je sais je n'sais pas faire ça //

A: can you do a drawing which represents you?

C: ah no, / ah I don't know how to do that (laugh)/

A: but the way you like/ however you want,/you don't get marks for it (laughter)//

C: that's not the problem (laughs) I don't know/ but well I don't know how to draw myself me/ to represent myself me/ with a drawing/ I don't know how to do it! //

A: do it however you like/ in your own way/ (C laughs) does that seem difficult to you?

C: yes yes it seems difficult to me/ not in the drawing/ but in the projection if you like of of of an image// huh/ I could stylise something huh / but there really I I don't know/ I'll do it to to well not to say that I I don't want to do it but I I I know I don't know how to do it //

When the subjects prefer to produce a portrait other than of themselves, one is tempted equally to draw a parallel between this type of production (representation through a portrait) and the use in discourse of “one” as well as the reiteration of the discourse (doxa) and points of view of others. We know that with regard to verbalisation, particularly in research enquiries, it is sometimes difficult to know what belongs to the particular point of view of a given enunciator and what belongs to “one” from the point of view of an indeterminate enunciative source, because of the constant toing and froing between the two sources. We see that when representing the self through a drawing the subjects can say that they are going to draw “somebody else”, “anybody”, but during the execution of the task we hear them say “I have hair like that, I have small ears” etc. Thus “the other”, the “anybody” can take on the form of “me”. Or, inversely, when the drawing is to be a self-portrait, once finished it is presented as somebody other than the self. Sometimes even of another gender. Here, otherness, the other self, is not in the discourse only, it is also “bodily”. Here are some examples:

Example 15- Mr F

A-est-ce que vous pouvez faire un dessin qui vous représente?(...)
F- ah ah! bon (silence long dessine) bon c'est tout ce que je peux faire// Je vous dis tout de suite ce n'est pas vous pasque vous êtes plus jolie que ça
A- (A est surprise) merci //alors, c'est une femme?//
F - c'est une femme //

A - can you do a drawing which portrays you? (...)
 F - ah ah! well (long silence draws) well that's all I can do// I'll tell you right now it isn't you because you're prettier than that
 A - (A is surprised) thank you //so, it's a woman?//
 F - it's a woman //

Example 16- Mme S

A: est-ce que pouvez faire quelque chose qui vous représente
S: quelque chose qui me représente? Xaaaa! écoutez je je je je je là mm/ j'aimerais mieux faire quelque chose qui représente autre chose que moi.

A: can you do a something which portrays you
 S: something which portrays me? Haaa! listen I I I I II there mm/ I would rather do something which portrays something other than me.

Example 17 - Mr H.

H: - un dessin qui me représente? dans quel domaine? je n'ai aucune idée/ je ne vois pas c'que j'peux imaginer// à quoi je peux m'identifier? si ça peut être un âne, je ferai un âne.

H: a drawing which represents me? in which domain? I have no idea/ I don't see what I can envisage//what can I identify myself with? yes it could be a donkey, I'll do a donkey.

Example 18 - Mr G

A - Vous faites un dessin qui vous représente d'après vous //

G - Ça ne me représentera s ûr'ment pas ! ça serait encore vous, je vous verrais, je pourrais encore faire quelque chose, mais moi !!

A - You do a drawing which portrays you in your opinion//

G - It certainly won't portray me! it would be you again, I'd see you, I could still do something, but me!!

8. The infinite and fleeting nature of the interpretative task

As we can see, many interpretations and points of view which do not necessarily converge can be extracted from this survey. Doubtless it is wisest to consider them not to be mutually exclusive. From the moment of conception of this project to its realisation, there has been ceaseless evaluative-interpretative behaviour on the part of the researcher: a) an interpretative activity put into action during the interviews, b) an interpretation which was elaborated throughout the study (between the interviews), c) and an attempt to carry out an analysis of the corpus as a whole. Does the "overview" of these interpretations shed light upon or on the contrary obscure the analysis? It appears that the analysis not only of the discourses which converge (the common core) but also of those which present peculiarities (variation) reveals to us the heavy weight of the infinite and fleeting nature of the interpretative task. It seems that the multiple modes of reaction on the part of the subjects is in itself enlightening. Thus the contrast that, through their behaviours, they caused to appear between discourse and drawing shows us that without doubt, as human beings, we fear being subjected to a monointerpretation more than being subjected to a multiplicity of readings.

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Codification of non-verbal expression

- 1) short ("I") and long ("II") pauses
- 2) "..." vocalic lengthening
- 3) "=" speech break
- 4) Insistance and loudness are indicated by capitals.