

Anchoring in lived experience as an act of resistance

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The Role of Micro-phenomenology research and practice in the urgent ecological questions that our society is meeting

The pandemic we are going through is an unprecedented situation from which tragic consequences loom. Disturbing and painful though it is, we should however remember that it is but a symptom of a profound ecological crisis which is already generating tremendous suffering, and which threatens with extinction most living species and perhaps all humankind. This ecological crisis is due to our way of life, which exhausts the earth's resources. The purpose of this article is to show that this way of life and the ecological catastrophe it is bringing about are intimately linked to our blindness to that which is nevertheless closest to us: our own lived experience. Most of the time, we are cut off from ourselves, from what vibrates and lives within us, and this disconnection has catastrophic consequences in all areas of human existence. Retrieving contact with our experience is the precondition that would allow the regaining of our lucidity, our dignity, and the courage to change our model of society.

The exclusion of lived experience

This loss of contact is not a simple hypothesis ventured to try to explain the discomfort that undermines our lives, but a discovery from the most recent research in cognitive sciences, which studies the functioning of the mind. At the end of the last century, Francisco Varela, a pioneering biologist in this field, sounded the alarm²: to progress in understanding the human mind, research cannot be based solely on "objective" data that can be recorded from the outside, but must acquire a rigorous method for studying human experience, hitherto excluded from the field of scientific investigation. How can we claim to study inner processes such as

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² Francisco Varela (1996) Neurophenomenology: A methodological remedy for the hard problem. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 3: 330–335.

emotion, decision making or reading when relying solely on the recording of brain activity, heart rate and eye movements, and disregarding what the subject is *experiencing*?

It was while trying to collect descriptions of such experiences that the researchers made an astonishing and shocking discovery: a large part of what we feel, imagine and think from moment to moment eludes us. A particularly striking study shows that we spend more than half of our time leaving the situation that we are presently living to replay scenes from the past or to project ourselves into the future, without even realizing it³. But this "attentional drift" is only the most superficial and easily recognizable form of our absence to ourselves. If for example we experience pain or an unpleasant emotion, we immediately try to protect ourselves from it, and surreptitiously clench to avoid feeling it. If on the contrary we encounter a pleasant experience, we try to maintain it by a subtle anticipation which prevents us from being completely present to it.

Whatever our activity, this straining towards the objective or the content of the activity (the "what") creates a narrow attentional tunnel which conceals the activity itself (the "how"). For example, if I walk to an appointment, preoccupied with the concern of arriving on time and with the anticipation of the exchange, I am not aware of the bodily sensations induced by my walking. While writing this text (at least in the moments when my attention is not drifting), I am absorbed by the content of the ideas that I am trying to express. During this time, I am not aware of the contractions in my back, of the contact of my fingers with the keys of the computer, of the rapid succession of inner images, light emotions, comments, appreciations and comparisons which constitute my activity of writing, nor of the preverbal "thread of thought" on which this activity is based. Moreover, I am not even aware that something is missing. All our activities are included, from the most concrete to the most abstract: not only do we not know (how we go about doing them), but we are not aware that we do not know.

On the contrary, we believe that we do know, that is to say that a representation of our experience is superimposed on our actual experience, contributing to our disconnection from it. For example, how does an idea come to us? Although this is (luckily) a very common experience, we know little about it. Indeed when an idea appears - even a scientific idea that has had important implications in our daily life - all the interest usually focuses on its *content* and the exploration of its consequences, very little attention is paid to the *experience* of its emergence, to the process which made its discovery possible. The reduction of the idea to its content expressed in verbal form, and the lack of awareness of its genesis, has the effect of reducing our understanding of it to a disembodied cognitive mechanism. We represent our

³ Killingsworth M. and D. Gilbert D. (2010). A wandering mind is an unhappy mind. *Science* **33** (6006): 932.

ideas as thought processes taking place in a "mind" endowed with two main characteristics: on the one hand it is localized *in the head* and separated from the body, on the other hand it is localized "*inside*" and separated from outside.

Where mind and body meet

The collection of meticulous descriptions of the emergence of ideas made possible today by suitable methods⁴ paints a completely different picture. First of all, this exploration shows that in the experience of ideation, the distinction that we believe we perceive between our mind and lived body dissolves⁵. Many thinkers have noticed that movement, walking for example, is conducive or even essential to thinking, not only because it allows you to relax the focus on the question to be resolved, but because it allows you to find the rhythm, the gesture, which constitutes the very germ of the idea. Before an idea is expressed in verbal, mathematical, pictorial or musical form, it appears in the form of a direction of thought, a "line of force", of which Einstein gives us an overview: "During all these years - he writes - there was a feeling of direction, of going straight towards something concrete. It is very difficult, of course, to express this feeling in words. But I had it in a sort of overview, in a certain way visually."⁶ An idea is first of all a movement, a rhythm, not pertaining to any particular sensory modality, but nevertheless subtly felt. This rhythm unfolds in a moving "landscape", endowed with a texture, contrasts of densities and intensities, which are completely specific to it. Even when the idea has been expressed, this gestural and quivering dimension remains; beneath concepts, it constitutes the very dimension of *meaning*. It is anchoring in this felt dimension which makes a thought or spoken word embodied and alive.

"The inner space of the world"

The careful exploration of this dimension of experience where the border between mind and body dissolves shows that it is not located in ourselves, in an individual and private "inner" space, separated from the "exterior" space by a rigid border. Ordinarily, we perceive ourselves as individuals, "subjects" clearly separated from the external "objects" which surround us and constitute our "environment". Suppose for example that during a walk in the countryside, a bend in the path reveals a new landscape. Immediately, I recognize its elements: "birch trees, a stream", which I locate over there, at a distance from myself whose "point of view" is

⁴ Such as Micro-phenomenology (www.microphenomenology.com). See for example Claire Petitmengin (2006). Describing one's subjective experience in the second person: An interview method for the science of consciousness. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Science*, 5, 229–269.

⁵ Claire Petitmengin (2016). The scientist's body at the source of meaning. In: Schoeller D. (ed). In: Schoeller D. & Saller V. (Eds.). *Thinking thinking. Practicing radical reflection*. Freiburg / München: Verlag Karl Alber. 28-49.

⁶ Holton G. (1982). *L'invention scientifique, Thémata et interpretation*; Paris: PUF, pp.440-441.

located here, at eye level. But there is another way of looking: a less tensed, less focused attention allows me to recognize contrasts of light and shadow in the leaves, or shades of green and pink in the reflections on the water, that my focus on the elements of the landscape prevented me from discerning. By adopting an even more open, diffuse, receptive mode of attention, I can also let the landscape come to me, let myself be "touched" by it. Instead of looking for objects over there, I let colors, shapes, movements, sounds come to me. I let the atmosphere, the particular rhythms that emanate from the landscape permeate me, a little like a perfume, or music. The landscape is no longer an expanse that presents itself to me as a beautiful spectacle, a photograph of which would capture the experience in its entirety⁷. It is no longer looked at, but felt, and this feeling dissolves the boundary between it and me⁸. Here are two descriptions of this experience:

"I can sense very well *inside myself*, in my trunk, the river flowing, or the poplar standing up straight towards the sky, or the poplar swaying, on the banks of the Sarthe, when the wind is blowing hard. (...) To tell the truth, I cannot *see* the poplar soaring. I cannot *see* the river flowing. I feel the river flowing in me. I feel the poplar standing up straight."⁹

"In such moments, there are no longer any barriers between me and things. It is as though I no longer had a skin. For example, that poplar over there, it as though something was radiating from it, a quivering, a diffuse light, a very quiet and very fine sound, which comes right up to me and touches me in an indescribable way. Everything becomes incredibly touching. It is as though the space between things became denser, more luminous, more vibrant, and as though there was nothing else except this space." (Lara)¹⁰

In this experience, the vibrations of light, the ebb and flow of water, the texture of trees and stones, the breath of the wind ... do not break at the border of the skin, but unite inside and outside into one uninterrupted space¹¹. The landscape pervades me. We are made of the same stuff, of the same tender, sensitive, alive and shivering "matter", for which our language has no word, but which the philosopher Merleau-Ponty called "the flesh of the world"¹², and which we will also call in this text the "felt dimension" of experience.

In summary, when, loosening the tensions that cut us off from it, we come into contact with our experience, we do not find a "mind", a "body", and its "environment". These words are abstractions, concepts that veil the reality of what we live. The song of the bird is not over there in the throat of the bird, it is not here in me either, it resonates in a space where the

⁷ François Jullien (2014). *Vivre de paysage, ou L'impensé de la raison*. Paris: Gallimard.

⁸ Rilke "When we hold still we are scarcely to be distinguished from all that surrounds us." (cité par Andy Fischer (2013). *Radical Ecopsychology*. State University of New-York Press. p. 134.)

⁹ Jousse M. Le jeu manuel de l'enfant. Cours à l'École d'Anthropologie du 24 janvier 1938.

¹⁰ Excerpt of interview from Claire Petitmengin (2007). Towards the source of thoughts. The gestural and transmodal dimension of lived experience. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14: 54–82.

¹¹ "Instant after instant the whole world collapses in my blood." (Rilke, Letter of December 17th, 1912 to Marie de Tour et Taxis).

"The landscape flows into the body. The wind rushes into the blood. The sky rises to the heart." (Christian Bobin (1990). *Eloge du rien*. Editions Fata Morgana. p. 22)

¹² Merleau-Ponty M. (1984). *Le visible et l'invisible*. Paris: Gallimard, notably pp. 116, 189, 192.

boundary between here and there does not exist, where the world and I meet, which Rilke called "the inner space of the world" (*der Weltinnenraum*). What is true of the song of the bird is also true of the reflections of the light, of the roughness of the rock and the freshness of the water. It is this experience, "at the impalpable source of sensations"¹³, that some poets, some painters try to arouse. For this, they do not seek to describe or reproduce exactly the object, the landscape which gives itself to their gaze, in order to make us see it, but through the image, "to make us *see* how it *touches* us. (...) The painter reworks and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things."¹⁴

The gestural source of thoughts

It is from this sensitive and fluid matter where the distinction between mind and body dissolves that our ideas seem to be made: beneath the words, our ideas are rhythms that have as their source in the movements of the world. These movements are of infinite diversity, as shown by certain languages which have dozens of words to designate a living being, according to its multiple attitudes and possible actions. They do not say "the bird flies away", but "the seagull flies up, in the unique way that the seagull does it, when this particular wind, or this particular breeze, coming from the sea or coming from the land, starts blowing with this particular strength". Sometimes barely perceptible, like the particular quality of the wind blowing in the foliage just before thunderstorm rain, or "the small shadow that runs in the grass and gets lost at sunset"¹⁵, these subtle movements resonate and imprint themselves in us at all times¹⁶, without our knowledge, particularly in children, much more receptive than adults. Our thoughts, even those which seem the most abstract, are then the replay of these movements in microscopic and invisible form¹⁷. The more gestures we let resonate within us during childhood, the more we become able to think finely, in a personal and original way. This is why it is essential to let the little child "watch everything, touch everything, break everything, replay everything, everywhere."¹⁸ Movements of spurt, deployment, swinging, acceleration, stopping ... the gestures that accompany any verbal expression, often without our

¹³ Gasquet J. (2002). *Cézanne*. Éditions Encre marine. p. 242.

¹⁴ *Idem.*, p. 33.

¹⁵ Crowfoot warrior, quoted by T.C. McLuhan, *Pieds nus sur la terre sacrée*, p. 21

¹⁶ In oral cultures, "each place has its own dynamism, its own patterns of movement, and these patterns engage the senses and relate them in particular ways, instilling particular moods and modes of awareness." (David Abram (1996). *The spell of the sensuous*. New-York: Vintage Books, p. 182)

¹⁷ "Language is the voice of things, waters and woods." (Merleau-Ponty (1996). *Le visible et l'invisible*. Paris: Galimard, p. 204)

"The invisible shapes of smells, rhythms of cricketsong, and the movement of shadows all, in a sense, provide the subtle body of our thoughts..." (David Abram, *op. cit.*, p. 262)

¹⁸ Marcel Jousse. Cours à l'École d'Anthropologie du 7 décembre 1937.

knowledge, are the direct expression of this invisible gestural dimension, in which speech takes its source and meaning¹⁹.

But thought and speech have been cut off from their gestural source. This gap seems to have been served by the appearance of alphabetic writing, which prompted the development of abstract, general concepts, disconnected from the concretely lived situations from which they derive their meaning²⁰. We forgot the gestural and deep meaning of words: "the gesture having disappeared, the verb and its meaning remained up in the air"²¹.

In summary, the sensitive "matter" of which our thoughts are made and where words take on meaning is not enclosed within us, it is the very stuff of which the world is made. It is contact with this matter that gives us the feeling of existing, that makes us alive.

It is in this subtle gestural dimension where thought is played out that the encounter between humans also seems to unfold. As careful observation of the interactions between mother and infant shows²², the baby's world is not a world of objects, but of "dynamics of vitality"²³. The baby does not perceive the bottle, the diaper, but *how* his mother takes it, takes the bottle, unfolds the diaper, that is to say the rhythms of her gestures, the "tone" that emerges from them. These rhythms have the particularity of being "transmodal", that is to say transposable from one sensory modality to the other, which makes affective attunement between mother and child possible, moment by moment: for example (after about 6 seconds), the mother will respond to the babbling of her baby with a caress of the same intensity and rhythm. In adulthood this dynamic and transmodal world remains the one in which human relationships are played out. Beneath the verbal and visual interactions which grab the attention, the particular "atmosphere" which emerges from the other person, more perceptible during a first meeting, or after a long separation, her distinctive way of approaching you, of moving, the variations in intensity of her gaze, the rhythm and melody of her voice, to which you attune without your knowledge ... form the very texture of the meeting.

Duality as an act

The drama that we live as a human born into our western civilization is that we are most of the time cut off from this dimension, the living heart of our experience. More precisely, we cut ourselves off from it, by a process of rigidification that it is possible to recognize and

¹⁹ "All Greek and Latin roots, which come from Indo-European, have a concrete gestural meaning." (Marcel Jousse, Cours à l'École d'Anthropologie du 23 novembre 1935)

²⁰ David Abram, *The spell of the sensuous, op. cit.*, for example pp. 110 – 111.

²¹ Jousse M. Cours à l'École d'Anthropologie du 14 décembre 1940

²² Daniel Stern (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant*. Basic Books.

²³ Daniel Stern (2010). *Forms of vitality: Exploring dynamic experience in psychology, the arts, psychotherapy, and development*. Oxford University Press.

describe²⁴. From moment to moment, we spend considerable energy trying to identify in the fluidity of the world fixed forms, objects of which we can say “this”, because it is only upon this condition that we can think of ourselves as individuals and say "I". For example when a sound occurs, in a fraction of a second it is recognized as the song of a blackbird over there in the plum tree: in the same fraction of a second, "I" come into the world. From moment to moment, micro-tensions create "external" objects separated from an "inner" space by a rigid border, which give me a feeling of existence, a borrowed existence. The more rigid this border becomes, the more solid the objects become, and the more my existence is confirmed. This mutual confirmation, which arises in perceptual events, continues tirelessly in all strata of experience. This process is a matter of survival. Because when we lose something, someone, it is our own identity that we lose. It is an exhausting effort. Impossible to let go, we have to "hold" the world. This incessant straining to control, in an attempt to maintain our borders, divides, rigidifies, and leads to constriction and pain. We are so busy protecting ourselves from death that we protect ourselves from life itself.

The dis-animation of the world

Indeed, the split between an "interior" and "exterior" space has the effect of depriving them both of life, of dis-animating them. In our western society, we imagine outside space, the non-human "environment" as a uniform, indifferent and inert geometric space. We perceive "nature" as a system of objects distinct and distant from us, intended to be possessed and exploited, in the best of cases as a place for sports recreation or gently bucolic walks whose benefits scientific studies are trying today to quantify. Separated from the forests that feed it, measured in terms of area and yields, the earth is becoming depleted. When walking through a desolate field, where insects and birds are silent, we can feel within us the fading of its vitality dynamics.

We ourselves have lost contact with the flesh of the world, the source of life and meaning. Cut off from its subtle rhythms, we are drained of our vital energy. Modern cities and the technological environment offer us only impoverished vitality dynamics, which cannot nourish us, or bring us unwholesome food. Dominated by the sense of vision that distances, scrutinizes and freezes, contemporary architecture privileges perspectives, distances, shapes, lines and surfaces, creating cold spaces²⁵. These spaces, which favor the adoption of a focused and taut gaze which scrutinizes and grabs, are unsuitable for offering the contrasts of texture,

²⁴ Claire Petitmengin (2017). Enaction as a lived experience. Towards a radical neurophenomenology. *Constructivist Foundations* 12 (2): 139-147.

²⁵ Juhani Pallasmaa (2005). *The eyes of the skin. Architecture and the senses*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

density, depth, luminosity and resonance likely to awaken the vibrant and felt dimension of experience.

The harmful impact of disconnection from the source of experience can be seen in many other areas, such as education. Education is essentially conceived as the transmission of vast quantities of intellectual knowledge, not as connecting to their living source. To do this, it imposes immobility on the child as well on the adult, limiting their gestures to the movements of their eyes to read and their fingers to write. Development of the capacity to invent new ideas, to think independently, would on the contrary require familiarization with the non-verbal and gestural dimension where ideas take their source and meaning, currently almost completely obscured. "The magic teacher" who knows how to capture the attention of children and make their eyes shine because they come into contact, beneath isolated objects of knowledge in their compartmentalized disciplines, with vitality dynamics that give them meaning and life, almost does it by stealth. For many children, schooling is a long path of self-denial and disembodiment. It is the painful learning of tension and constriction meant to erect and maintain a rigid boundary between "mind" and "body", which therefore progressively lose their sensitivity, weaken and die. Unless the child refuses, and finds himself excluded from the school system.

Disconnected from the felt dimension of our experience, losing the ability to think independently and creatively, we lose our very dignity. Our life is often reduced to the exhausting and compulsive quest for confirmation of our existence by the acquisition of objects, which leads to the dead end and the ecological disaster that we know. Because the weaker we become, the more we try to satisfy ourselves with frantic consumption, and the more we exhaust the earth²⁶. But maintaining the "experiential starvation"²⁷. from which we suffer is an essential condition for the functioning of the current economic system. "By organizing society such that we can find little real nutrition for our deepest organismic hungers, our economic system *creates* the insatiability that economists then interpret as the essential human condition."²⁸ In other words, this rupture with the living heart of our experience is also the very condition for the survival of our current economic system, which strives to maintain it.

²⁶ Our world is "a world in which living things die to make a dead thing grow". R. Rogers cité par Andy Fischer, *Radical Ecopsychology, op. cit.*, p. 84

²⁷ Andy Fischer. *Idem*, p. 172

²⁸ Andy Fischer, *Idem*, p. 168.

Reanimating our lives

If the common root of our depletion and that of the earth lies in the tensions that cut us off from the source of our lived experience, where our most intimate space is not distinguished from the space of the world, the essential condition to solve the inextricable ecological problems which we meet today, and which risk leading inexorably to the extinction of humanity, is to regain contact with our experience. The stake is not to recognize interrelationships, to re-establish connections, to repair or to weave links between "humans" and "nature" conceived as separate, but to recognize their unity at the heart of experience. The most overwhelming statistics, the most convincing demonstrations of the harmful effects of our way of life on the earth, will remain powerless until we give ourselves the means to recognize this unity within us, and to think and act from there.

Insofar as the (economic, social, scientific...) current system is based on the extinction of experience, the call to come back to it is an act of resistance, both individual and political. On the individual level, it is a question of recognizing and untying the tensions that separate us from what vibrates and lives within us, and the suffering that they cause. This loosening, which some meditative paths have no other purpose than to elicit and stabilize, can also occur unpredictably. One day, there is a book, an encounter, a song, or a certain light through the foliage, and suddenly you surrender. Sometimes this letting go occurs in the face of suffering, an illness, or the loss of a loved one. At the end of fatigue or pain, you stop fighting, you accept the loss of your reference points. Then something releases, breaks in you and delivers you. The current period of quarantine could have this liberating effect. It is possible that you may then feel awaken, pulsate in you a space difficult to locate, at the very heart of your flesh. You may have the feeling that this area was numb, that you had forgotten its existence. But regaining contact with it gives you the feeling of gathering yourself together, of retrieving your unity, your wholeness. Life comes back.

When our tireless quest for solidity is exhausted, a great relief occurs. In this state of exhaustion, of destitution, instead of narrowing space opens wide. It's as if the loosening of our grip on the world allowed it to unfold in all its depth and richness²⁹. Released from the compulsive need to acquire objects, whether tangible or intangible, to confirm our own existence, we become able to live in a more sober, dignified way. The economic system loses its grasp over us, we become less and less dependent on it. Having no more borders to protect, less on the defensive, we become more curious about others, more daring, and capable of

²⁹ As François Roustang writes: "When you can't do anything anymore, when you don't know anything anymore, when you don't want anything anymore, because everything has collapsed, then you suspect what life is." (François Roustang (2004). *Il suffit d'un geste*. éditions Odile Jacob. p. 170)

acting in a truly generous way, without expecting anything in return. In this relaxation of tension and opening space, a kind of softness, tenderness arises. Plants, trees, earth and water are recognized as living beings, different from us but *beings*, to whom we are grateful and whom we want to take care of³⁰. Animated by "a spirit of woods and sources"³¹, we become much more sensitive to their presence, to their contact, to the resonance of their vitality dynamics, we recognize them as made of the same texture as us. Regaining contact with the felt dimension of our experience gives us the lucidity and determination necessary to identify what obstructs, freezes and exhausts life and relinquish it, to recognize what nourishes life³², gives it meaning, for which we would be ready to give ours... and to choose to prioritize that. It could be that the pandemic that we are currently experiencing creates a rupture conducive to such choices³³.

Reanimation the city, school, research...

On the political level, this call to return to experience and the recognition of the absence of duality between me and the world, mind and body, brings about a profound transformation in the activities of the city. Let us imagine a school which allows children, in contact with movements of the world, to come into contact with the living source of ideas and meaning. Let us imagine a medicine which treats not the measurable body-object, but the lived, sensitive body. Let us imagine cities, houses which envelop us in their vitality dynamics and elicit in us enough receptivity and confidence to let ourselves be permeated by them. Imagine a respectful, attentive, patient agriculture, based on the meticulous observation of landscapes, of which permaculture is an example³⁴... All activities are affected.

These mutations suppose to switch from a conceptual and abstract representation of the processes of creation, understanding and transmission of meaning, of the experience of illness, healing and of the end of life, of the encounter with architectural spaces³⁵... to an understanding of these processes that is anchored in lived experience. Such an understanding requires the support of meticulous and rigorous descriptions, collected from singular

³⁰ Beekeeping is a paradigmatic example of this transition, when the beekeeper removes his white coveralls and the veil which covers his face, drops the smoker spitting thick smoke, to take care of the bees with bare hands, attentive to the changes in rhythm of their dance and to the variations in the tone of their song.

Marc Zischka (2020). *Mémoire de Permaculture*, chapitre 3 : Vers l'apiculture permaculturelle <http://www.semisauvages.net/memoire-dpa-marc-zischka-semisauvages.html>

³¹ Chinese painter Guo XI, quoted by par François Jullien *Vivre de paysage*, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

³² François Jullien (2005). *Nourrir sa vie. A l'écart du bonheur*. Paris: Seuil.

³³ The beneficial questionnaire offered par Bruno Latour can help us: Bruno Latour. What protective measures can you think of so we don't go back to the pre-crisis production model? AOC, March 29th, 2020 <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/fr/node/851.html>

³⁴ David Holmgren. (2014). *Permaculture, Principes et pistes d'action pour une société soutenable*. Editions Rue de l'échiquier.

³⁵ Marcus Weisen (2020). Researching unconscious dimensions of architectural experience. Conference "Research Perspectives in Architecture" at Technische Universität, München.

experiences, located in space and time - only such an approach can give us a chance to become aware of what we are actually living, behind the veil of what we believe to live³⁶. This approach is not, however, condemned to remain trapped in the singularity of particular situations: the analysis of numerous descriptions of experiences shows that beyond the infinite diversity of their contents, they present generic structures, results likely to be reproduced, verified or falsified, which therefore meet the very criteria of a scientific approach.

This new discipline, of which Micro-phenomenology³⁷ shows the way, opens up an immense field of research, which sheds new light on all human activities: writing, building a house, teaching, playing music, creating clothes, cooking, deciding, praying... At their heart, this discipline makes it possible to recognize the felt dimension, to become aware of the inner attitudes that cut ourselves off from it or root ourselves in it, and to identify the practices and contexts that foster these attitudes. This exploration can start with the most common activities. For example, there are different ways to read a text: a hasty and superficial way, and a slow and patient way, which consists in retrieving, beyond the words, the living gestures that the author has laid there, and allowing them to mature³⁸. Which teaching methods, which writing processes, which types of media can foster the transition from the predatory, impatient mode to the slow, attentive mode? For example, which type of reading do digital media favor? Whatever the activity, the challenge for our society is to have enough discernment to identify the conditions for anchoring an activity in the flesh of the world, and enough courage to privilege them. The integration of lived experience supposes notably a profound transformation in the way of doing science: a way that is both precise and rigorous, but slow and gentle, which gives the researcher time to get in touch with his or her experience, and requires great lucidity and great determination³⁹.

Whether it concerns doing research or painting, caring for others or cultivating the land, entering into intimate contact with one's own experience is an act of liberation and of resistance. This act involves the creation of a shared language anchored in the experience of life, for which ours possesses no words. The task is immense. But regaining contact with the heart of life will make us joyful, daring and free enough to devote ourselves to it.

³⁶ "An experience which is not a singular moment of the life of a specific person, is not an experience." (Pierre Vermersch (1997). *La référence à l'expérience subjective. Revue phénoménologique Alter* (5), p. 8)

³⁷ Website www.microphenomenology.com

³⁸ For Marcel Jousse, this mode of reading supposes that we retrieve these gestures in us. We must fill the book with our childhood experiences, because "it was during our childhood that we imprinted into us the truly living and life-giving elements that allow us today to infuse a constantly young life into dead texts." (Marcel Jousse, *Mimisme humain et Psychologie de la lecture*. Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, p. 24)

³⁹ See for example Jem Bendell (2018). *Deep adaptation: a map for navigating climate tragedy*. IFLAS Occasional paper 2. <https://jembendell.com/2019/05/15/deep-adaptation-versions/>

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