

Agnes Bolinska
Agnes Interview 2
Sampling day 2

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the April 13 interview with Agnes that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/KUCfXjUruOU>. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt
Agnes = Agnes Bolinska
MD = Michael Dickson
Y-YK = Yun-Ying Kuo

- 0:00 Russ comments: The comments that I have inserted in the transcript below are intended as commentary about what I think at the time I write the comment, which is generally within a day or so of the interview. They are not to be confused with the Truth with a capital T; there is no guarantee that I will agree with them if I review them at some later time, at which time I might revise or extend them; they are invitations to Michael and/or Agnes to disagree, or to amplify, or to say they don't understand, and so on. If they wish to insert their own comments, they should pick a color other than this green, and then do so. They should also feel free to correct the transcript.
- 0:01 RTH: So this is going to be Agnes's second day. Anything we should be talking about sampling-wise before we launch into that?
- 0:13 Agnes: I don't think so. I think I did well. No, actually, you'll, you'll be the judge of this. I feel like I, I improved from last time, but maybe not [laughs].
- 0:21 RTH: We'll, we'll we will, we will see
- 0:23 Agnes: That. You can tell me. You can tell me I'm wrong, [laughs].
- 0:27 RTH: It's, yeah, I guess that's my job.
- 0:30 Agnes: You probably will tell me I'm wrong. I'm sure it!
- 0:33 RTH: We'll see. So I'm, I'm ready if everybody else is ready.
- 0:38 Agnes: I'm ready.
- 0:39 RTH: What was in your experience at the moment of beep 1?

Sample 2.1 discussion starts here

- 0:43 Agnes: Okay, so beep 1 was this morning, um, I was working on a paper. So I was sitting at my desk at my computer and um, I had like a document open. And in the document I had started writing a comment. So I had started, I had written "Wallace:" and then I was gonna write "Samatha," but I had just wr, written "Sa" so far, and I had turned away from the screen to my book. So that's just kind of background.
- 1:18 Um, and um, in the moment, in the moment of the beep, um, I was back, like, I was back from the book turning my attention back to the computer screen and um, I was seeing that comment that I had just started that "Wallace: Sa," Um, and so I was focused on this comment, um, in the screen, but everything else, um, in my visual field was there. So it wasn't blurry or anything, but my attention was on this comment and I was saying to myself internally, "Wallace Sa," and then it beeped [gestures a chopping motion] like in the middle of that saying.
- 2:10 RTH: [pause] And is that your opening salvo there? Is that the
- 2:13 Agnes: Pardon?
- 2:14 RTH: That's your opening salvo? That's the main description?
- 2:16 Agnes: That's it, yeah. Okay. Not very exciting.
- 2:20 RTH: I'm, I don't, don't mean that as a comment. I'm just wanting to make sure that I'm, that you're not just pausing to get to the focus of the second part or whatever.
- 2:27 Agnes: That's all, that's all there is to it. Okay.
- 2:30 RTH: [laughs]. Alright then. So, uh, is it, is it the case that I am reading what I am seeing? Is that my experience that I'm reading what I'm seeing? Or does it more like I'm just in parallel I'm saying this and while my eyeballs happen to be seeing it, or maybe that question doesn't make sense.
- 2:51 Agnes: I think I'm... Hmm, that's a good question. I wouldn't say I am reading it *per se*. I had just typed it. So I, I mean I saw those words, and of course there's a sense in which when you see a word or when I see a word, I think I probably read it, but I had just, I had just typed it. So I don't know if I would characterize myself as reading it, but I was seeing it. And I also wouldn't say that I was *not* reading it, but I wouldn't have framed it as *reading it*. It was more of a like saying, because I was gonna continue typing this comment.
- 2:51 Russ comments: Agnes's 2:51 turn is, I would say, highly subjunctified. I'll rewrite that turn and highlight the subjunctifiers:
I think I'm... Hmm, that's a good question. I wouldn't say I am reading it *per se*. I had just typed it. So I, I mean I saw those words, and of course there's a sense in which when you see a word or when I see a word, I think I probably read it, but I had just, I had just typed it. So I don't know if I would characterize myself as reading it, but I was seeing it. And I also wouldn't say that I was *not* reading it, but I wouldn't have framed it as *reading it*. It was more of a like saying, because I was gonna continue typing this comment

You may quibble with one or another of those as subjunctifiers, but either way, it's a lot.

3:35 RTH: So I gather from that that it's mostly two parallel strands that, that are doing sort of the same thing: my eyeballs are seeing, and I am experientially seeing primarily the words on the screen "Wallace: Sa"; and I am saying "Wallace Sa" But it, but that seems like more, more its own parallel deal rather than reading it from the screen.

4:01 Agnes: Yeah. That's how I would describe it. Yeah.

4:01 Russ comments: Agnes's 4:01 turn is a simple declarative statement. Zero subjunctifiers. It is short, to be sure, but RTH will file away the difference between Agnes sounding unsure (as at 2:51) and declarative (as at 4:01). That is, he will credit Agnes's grammar producer as recognizing and communicating the difference between when she is unsure of herself (2:51) or confident (4:01).

4:04 RTH: Oh, fair enough. And equally? Those two strands seem sort of equal to you?

4:08 Agnes: Yeah, I'd say 50—50, yeah.

4:10 RTH: Okay. And then let's, let's talk about the speaking. So I am saying "Wallace Sa," but I'm not saying that aloud. This is...

4:21 Agnes: Exactly. Yeah, I'm saying it in my head.

4:21 Russ comments: Note no subjunctifiers. Russ credits Agnes with confidence in apprehending inner speaking at the moment of the beep.

4:23 RTH: Yeah. And, and, and does this innerly speaking have a, have any characteristics, like prosody or just matter of fact saying or...?

4:35 Agnes: Yeah, just matter of fact saying, yeah, like, just as I just said it now, like "Wallace Shama," like, um, nothing, yeah, nothing much to say about it other than that.

4:46 RTH: Okay. And sometimes we make a distinction between the experience of *saying* this and the, the experience of *hearing* myself say it, [coughs] excuse me, I've got a cough. I feel fine, but have a cough. The, so

5:03 Agnes: I think I was more *saying* it rather than hearing myself say it. Yeah. It was like more productive.

5:09 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm good about that portion of it. Anybody have any questions about that?

5:20 And then I'm also seeing these words on the screen. And my understanding of that is that I'm both basically seeing the whole screen, but *most* of my attention is on the, these particular words.

5:34 Agnes: Exactly.

- 5:36 RTH: And like, and that would be what it sounds like as a figure/ground kind of a deal where the, the “Wallace Sa” is the figure and the rest of the stuff is there but not as brilliant or as whatever. Not, not that it’s blurry, but that I’m just not in, I’m not as interested in that my interest is in the one portion. [Agnes nods affirmatively throughout.]
- 5:58 Agnes: Exactly. Exactly.
- 6:05 RTH: Okay. And then I think I’m good about that. Anybody else have any questions about beep number 1?
- 6:14 MD: Um, I, I think I missed this. Did you say, did you say that it was more speaking or more hearing or, or a combination of both or neither? The, the, the, the spoken words.
- 6:28 Agnes: More speaking. More speaking.
- 6:29 MD: More speaking. Okay. And was it now, okay, this might be a, this might, this might be a wrong question, I think not wrong in the sense of disallowed, but just not relevant, but I’m gonna ask it anyway just to be sure. Is it.. Was there only cuz you said *more* speaking and a hundred percent and not a hundred percent speaking, if there’s any, is it, is it a sense that it’s your voice? What, even if you’re not hearing something?
- 6:29 Russ comments: In understanding this section, the reader might wish to know that Michael himself has just finished 11 days of sampling (see Part XV of <https://hurlburt.faculty.unlv.edu/ieo/ieo.html>) as the DES participant, which revealed that his own experience of speaking (whether aloud or silently) is much different from what Agnes is describing here.
- 6:55 Agnes: Yeah, it’s, it’s definitely my voice. Yeah. It’s definitely my voice and yeah, I’m not aware of hearing it apart from, y’know, when you speak something you typically, well, okay, sorry, this is maybe not allowed, but, um, I, I’m not aware of hearing it. [MD: Okay.] [inaudible]
- 7:15 MD: But somehow, you know, it’s your voice anyway.
- 7:17 Agnes: Yeah.
- 7:18 MD: Okay.
- 7:19 Agnes: Yeah, I mean, what I was just about to say is in just the same way when you normally speak, you’re also hearing your own voice. It was like that for me, innerly.
- 7:32 MD: Okay. That that, that I understood that. But I, so in what sense is it more speaking than hearing, then?

- 7:43 Agnes: Um, [pause] I don't know. I guess there's like, just, just as, um, when I,
- 7:54 MD: I don't mean to be challenged in that statement, I'm just trying to understand it.
- 7:56 Agnes: No, no, I, I know, I know. Um, and I'm trying to, I'm trying to think of the answer to that question. Um, I guess when I'm, like, it was, so I was typing this comment, and when I was typing, I was sort of like saying it to myself to then be typing it. So in that sense it was kind of like productive. Like it's not like I was listening. It's not like I was listening to my own voice telling me what to type. I was saying it as if I was going Wallace Samatha. type, type, type, like, except it was in my head.
- 8:29 MD: Okay. I think that's clear.
- 8:33 RTH: So I, I think Michael ask a fundamentally important question, which is very, which is very difficult to answer. But it's, it's something like most people when they use a tape recorder, for example, if they say something into the tape recorder and then play it back, they will say, "my experience of the, on the first part of that was speaking it. And the second part of it was hearing it." It's the same voice, same words, same inflection, same whatever. And then if you, but, and if you ask them *how you know* that you're doing the speaking in the first place and the hearing in the second place, they would say, well, y'know, I don't know the answer to that, but it's *obvious to me*: in the first case I'm speaking it, and in the second place, I'm, I'm hearing it because that's *the way it is*, is the, is about the only thing that people can say about that.
- 8:33 Russ comments: The question is of fundamental importance. How do you know, for example, that you *hear* the trumpet blaring and not that you *taste* the trumpet blaring or *see* it. Perception psychologists often say that you hear it because it begins in the ears, but that is a neural-excitation based, not an experience-based answer—most people have no experience in their ears of hearing the trumpet. And some people (usually called synesthetes) *do* taste or see trumpet blarings, even though the neural excitations start in their ears as well.
- I think most people learn that trumpets are *heard* because they have a long experiential history of differentiating phenomena—over the course of our lifetimes we have covered our ears, and covered one ear, and turned towards and away, and moved closer to and farther from, and covered our eyes, and covered one eye, and put things in our mouths, and up our noses, etc. etc. And phenomena that behave more or less coherently in one way in those situations come to be understood as *heard*, and phenomena that behave more or less coherently in another way come to be understood as *seen*, and so on. That I know of, there is no good discussion of that (I'd be happy to have someone point me to it).
- 9:22 Agnes: Yeah. And that's kind of, I, I feel like I was running up against that a little bit, y'know, like *that's the way it is*. And that's all I can say about that. Right.
- 9:22 Russ comments: The fact that Agnes can't say anything beyond *that's the way it is* likely means that she pretty unerringly distinguishes between speaking and hearing. Not everyone does. I would bet most of the ranch that this is an experiential

difference, not merely that some people use different words to describe the same experience.

9:30 MD: That's what I was hearing you say.

9:32 RTH: Hmm. But that isn't the way it is for everyone. And, and for those for whom it's, it's not so obvious then, then we have to try to answer these questions, even, even though those questions are almost impossible to answer. *And*, and, and we should *not* assume that just because it's this way for Agnes, or maybe this way for Agnes and Russ, that it's this way for everybody because that's not, not the way it is.

So shall we move on to beep number 2? Yeah, that's good. And, and Michael, you wanna be the principal interviewer here or?

10:12 MD: Yes, and uh, hopefully, uh, I'm at home now, so whatever microphone issues we had it real hopefully won't come into play here.

Sample 2.2 discussion starts here

10:20 Agnes: I wanna close my email so it's not making noises. Um, okay. So, um, I am now, um, I'm now reading a paper, um, on my computer screen. Um, now I'm standing at my standing desk. I, before I was sitting at my sitting desk, but maybe that doesn't matter. Um, and, um, I had just read the passage, um, and this was like a, a quote in a paper. So it was a quoted passage, "A person who may not even have been trained to become aware of his or her subjective experience and describe it with great precision (Petitmengin 2006)." [laughs]. That's the passage I, I had just read. Um, and that was a quote from Petitmengin 2006.

11:15 So, um, so when the beep went off, [makes chopping motion] um, I had just read that passage in my own voice. And, um, I also was seeing that quote on the screen; um, the Petitmengin 2006, um, was also in my visual awareness. Um, so it was, I was kind of reading it, but I wasn't speaking it out loud. Like I just *saw* that the reference rather than having read it aloud in my, um, in my own words. So there's the, the visual experience. And again, um, sorry this is very boring, but it's like [laughs] similar to the last one where I was seeing the passage, um, and I was focused on it in that same kind of, uh, figure ground way. Um, and then I had, had that experience of reading in my own voice, um, that quote.

12:22 MD: So are we ready for questions?

12:24 Agnes: Yes.

12:25 MD: Um, so I, I didn't, c, can, do you have an estimate of relative to what you just described of when the beep happened? I didn't quite understand that.

12:39 Agnes: Part of it. So, um, so I believe, and again, this is where it's kind of like hazy, but I believe it happened, it happened after I'd finished reading that.

12:52 MD: Okay.

- 12:52 Agnes: Right. So it didn't, it didn't interrupt that thing. So, um, one thing that I just don't, one question that I don't know how to answer is *what part of that passage is like the moment before the beep?* Like, I'm not, um, I'm not entirely clear on that. Like the, the, the last uninterrupted moment. I'm not sure what part of it. But my, um, but I had, I had finished reading it, like I had definitely finished reading it, so, [MD: Okay.] Yeah, it's possible that there was that, that there was some small moment after that reading it, cuz I had definitely finished reading it by when the beep went off.
- 13:33 MD: And you were saying all that, you were both reading it in your own voice and also seeing, and so you were finished reading. Were you still seeing it? Or were, or was the seeing part finished also?
- 13:48 Agnes: I was still seeing it, yeah. So I had finished reading it, but I was still like looking at it.
- 13:54 MD: And so when you say it...
- 13:55 Agnes: Was a for, for, for context, I don't know if this matters, but, um, this was a passage that I had highlighted. So like it was set apart from what was coming next. [MD: Okay.] Um, and, and I hadn't yet moved up like yet. I mean it's, I hadn't yet moved on to reading the next sentence.
- 14:16 MD: Okay. Um, and the, when, so when you say you were seeing *it*, do, do you mean you were seeing, let's say the last word of it? Or were you seeing the whole thing at once? Or something else, or maybe those aren't the right options. What were, what was *it* when you said I was still seeing *it*? What, what, what was *it*?
- 14:37 Agnes: So I'd say, um, the whole thing at once, like the highlighted portion, which was that quote, that's the *it*.
- 14:45 MD: Okay. And were you seeing it as highlighted? Like, like was the highlighting the thing you were seeing or was the passage the thing, or how, how does the highlighting relate to the seeing?
- 14:57 Agnes: It was the highlighted passage. [MD: Okay.] Um, so it wasn't just the highlighting, it wasn't just the words, it was the highlighted passage. And again, I mean, one thing I'm kind of realizing in, yeah, in attempting to answer the question is that, um, I mean, as I already said, I dunno what was precisely in like exactly the moment before the beep. I, I'm fairly confident that seeing that whole thing, um, *was*. Like that, that, that visual, okay, let me put it this way, that visual aspect, seeing that quoted passage, I feel pretty confident was like the last in, uninterrupted moment before the beep. Um, with the reading that passage, um, that may, like let's say the seeing was like this small of a time slice [gestures a small interval], the reading might be like this big of a time slice [gestures a wide interval] and it may overlap, but it's possible that like it was the reading and then the seeing, like that's the part that I feel not super confident about saying about my experience.
- 16:05 MD: So, but that's,

16:06 Agnes: That's my best.

16:07 MD: Okay. No, that, that's helpful. I, I want to ask another question about the seeing, but before, since you just said that, let me see if I can get some clarification on that. So you do you, do you feel like you, it was, you were, while reading, you were sort of, I, I guess, and, and I realize now this is right before the beep. I'm trying to understand this transition that you just talked about. So, so would it be right to say, or, or let, lemme put it this way, what's happening? Let's talk about the reading part first, even though that's a little before the beep. What was happening visually for you while you were reading? Or was anything happening visually?

16:07 Russ comments: It is strategically unwise to ask about something that's a little before the beep, because we have asked Agnes to ignore that portion. Questioning her about it might lead to her speculating about something that she didn't really attend to when it counted (at the beep). Worse, it will undermine DES going forwards, because it suggests to Agnes that she will have to pay attention to *everything*, not just what was ongoing at the moment of the beep. See the discussion by RTH in his 26:47 turn.

16:54 Agnes: I was looking at those words.

16:58 MD: Um, well you had to be looking at them unless you have 'em memorized. But I, I wanna know like what was like, were you having a visual experience that you were, that you were aware of? Well,

16:58 Russ comments: RE "you had to be looking at them unless you have 'em memorized"

That's not necessarily true. The experiential world does not operate according to the rules of the natural world.

Michael comments: I agree that Agnes didn't need to be *experiencing* (visually) the words. I was trying, in fact, to make exactly that distinction. So the statement "well you had to be looking at them" was (intended to be) a statement about the real world, not about Agnes' experience. The turn to "were you having a visual experience...?" was then supposed to be a turn to Agnes' experience (i.e., 'experience' in contrast to 'what you were looking at'). Perhaps that way of maintaining the distinction (between 'world' and 'experience') was too compact and non-explicit -- but also, given our history of discussions over the past two months, perhaps not.

17:06 Agnes: That's what I'm, I'm trying, I'm trying to finish, I'm trying to like finish that set that thought. Okay.

17:10 MD: Sorry.

17:12 Agnes: [laughs]. So I was looking at those words, which was the first part of what I wanted to say.

17:16 MD: Okay. Sorry. My bad.

17:18 Agnes: So, so, um, I believe that what was happening was that I wasn't like going one word at a time. Like focus on this word, focus on this word, focus on this word. I also don't think I was looking at that whole sentence, that whole highlighted chunk and just I've read it. Um, but I think it was something in between there. [MD: Okay.] Like I think my reading and that's, I mean, that's a good question, cuz like this is something that if, y'know, if we did it again, then I would pay more attention to that. But I believe that it was like, like kind of focusing on chunks of words probably.

17:18 Russ comments: This is a highly subjunctified turn (see the comment at 2:51), which is probably Agnes's grammar producer informing us that Agnes doesn't really believe what she is saying. And that, in turn, is the result of MD's asking a question that is about something that she has not paid attention to (see the comment at 16:07). In short, MD has asked a hard or impossible question, and Agnes, being a nice person, is trying to answer it, but she can't give a clear answer.

18:07 MD: Okay. Now, now. Okay. Okay. So, so then this transition, you talked about the transition from reading. There was...

18:15 Agnes: But actually, let me say, let me say something else. Like in the focusing on chunks of words, probably [laughs], um, I, I don't think it was like a chunks of words to the exclusion of anything else. It was more like the fo, like that the it figure became smaller and the ground was bigger, so it was like a zoomed in bigger ground. [MD: Right.] I dunno if that makes sense.

18:41 MD: I know that does make sense. I, I, I think that's how a lot of people read actually. But, um, not that that's relevant here. But, um, but, but now that transition, cuz you were doing this thing where you're saying like, here's the reading and then there's this. Was that, so was that a case of the kind of visual experience that you just described then switched to being like an experience of the whole thing? Is that's, well that's what I heard you saying, but I, I'm not sure that's right. I heard you correctly. Sorry.

18:41 Russ comments: RE "I think that's how a lot of people read actually"

First, notice that Agnes's 18:15 turn is highly subjunctified. That is, her grammar producer knows that she is not speaking the simple truth. I don't know what that truth is, but neither does Agnes, which I think is still the result of the unwise question.

My speculation is that Agnes, in trying to answer the question, is giving an entirely plausible or reasonable account of how reading plausibly or reasonably works. And MD agrees with the reasonableness of that account.

My work shows that that account, while reasonable, is not accurate for many people. Whether it is accurate for Agnes, I have no idea.

The bottom line: MD asked a risky question, Agnes gave a highly subjunctified answer, and Russ thinks we haven't learned anything reliable about Agnes's experience. Her account might be of high fidelity, but we have no way of knowing.

Russ comments at 45:20 and 49:18 the plausibility/reasonableness are enemies of the directly apprehended.

19:19 Agnes: I'm not sure. [MD: Okay.] This is where I'm just not sure about my experience, right. Um, and part of I think okay, if I want to say, but I can't say with confidence, that the answer to your question would be Yes, that, like I was going along reading it and then I was looking at the whole thing, but I'm not sure I can distinguish between *that* and like having just finished the sentence. Yeah. I'm not sure. [MD: Okay. Sorry. The answer is just I'm not sure.

19:19 Russ comments: Good. Agnes and her grammar produce are in alignment.

20:02 MD: Okay that's totally, totally fine. Uh, so one other question, because you mentioned in your initial description that you were also *visually* aware, but not *reading*, I think that's what you said, correct me if I'm wrong. The, the actual reference. [Agnes: Yes.] And I wasn't sure how that fit in to this, to the experience as we've now been describing it. Is that just like part of the whole picture that you're seeing? Or, or is there some special attention being paid to the reference or how, how does that fit in with the rest of this experience?

20:30 Agnes: It's part of the whole picture, like it was part of the highlighted quote. Um, one thing that I *didn't* do is read it. Right. So, I mean, I read it as in, I, I read it as in I saw it and recognized what it said, but unlike with the quote, the quoted passage, which I was reading aloud, reading in my head aloud in my own voice, that was just present to me and I, and I read it, but I didn't say the words in my voice.

21:04 MD: And still present at the, at the after the moment of transition. Is it present separately from the rest of the highlighted thing? Or is it just one of the part of the whole part of the whole thing?

21:14 Agnes: It's part of the, the, the, it's part of the whole highlighted thing. [MD: Okay.] Like, we see the highlighted passage, which includes the reference, the words, nothing is blur, there's no blurriness or anything like that. It's all just, um [MD: Okay.] Uh, in my visual experience.

21:31 MD: Alright. I think, I think I'm done with that.

21:36 RTH: So I've got a, a co, couple of follow ups about that. So one, one is, it seemed to me that the, the very last conversation that we're having wasn't as clear as I would've liked us to be about the difference between what was real, what's really out there on the page and what my experience is. So I'm accepting that what's really out there on the page is a highlighted portion with Petitmengin 2006 as part of that package. That's the, that's the real deal. But it, it's possible that I can have two simultaneous experiences that are aimed at one physical deal. And so I would like to know whether it *seems* like I'm seeing the passage *and* I'm seeing the name separately or not. And "I don't know" is a perfectly good answer to that.

22:24 Agnes: I'm seeing, I mean, what I am seeing, and I don't know if, I'm not sure if I fully understand the question. Um, what I am seeing is the entire highlighted passage, including the reference and the quote that I read. That's what I'm seeing.

22:43 RTH: Okay.

22:44 MD: And not differentiating one part from the other.

22:47 Agnes: No, no. The visual experience is kind of cohesive.

22:50 MD: That that's what I understood when you, when you answered my question. But I think Russ asked it in a clearer way than I did.

22:57 RTH: So the differentiation is that I have understood myself to have spoken the passage but not spoken "Petitmengin."

23:08 Agnes: Exactly.

23:11 RTH: Okay. Then what I'd like to give a little bit of a lecture here about the, about the mo, about the timing of the beep. So the beep is an event in the real world, but it, but the, the *experience* of the beep is an event in the *experiential* world. And those two things are not to be confused with each other. So if you're reading a passage and the beep occurs in the, in the real world, while I'm reading that package, it could ver- *passage* [correcting his "package"], it could very well be that your *experience* of the beep doesn't happen until you get to the end of the passage. So if my experience is aimed, y'know, pretty single-mindedly on this pack- passage, then I won't have processed the beep until I get to the end of, or I get to some halting place in the passage. But it, but it seems to me like I hear the beep for the first time *then*. So the point that I'm trying to make is that the, the sequence that we were shooting for, that y'all were, were shooting for in that, in that exposition might be illusory, that there it is not the case that there is a necessarily a clearly demarcated in-physical-world sequence.

24:19 Agnes: Yeah. So that makes sense. Um, but I can only report on my experience. Right. [Agnes inaudible]

24:23 RTH: And that's, and that's all we're asking, that's all we're asking for. So the question is when the beep *seems* to come [Agnes: Yeah.] And, uh, and, and when the beep actually occurs is a, is a very different thing. And, and I, and I'll also say just more or less as, as an aside, that the different processing portions of your brain don't necessarily process the heard beep at the same time. So the beep might seem to come while I'm speaking at a different time than the beep comes while I'm hearing at a different time when it is when I'm seeing. And that's, [RTH shrugs shoulders] and, and yet they all seem like the same beep. [Agnes: Mm-hmm.] So there, so there is some indeterminacy of when the beep occurs. And for some people that can be, that could be a quite long time, actually.

28:18 So, and then I, I would like us to, I would like to make one more comment about the chunks of words. So what, what the experience of reading is. We, we had a sort

of a long speculation about what that, looking back, what, what it must have been like to have been speaking that passage, or something like that, or reading that passage. Well, I would like us, I would like us about that (and actually about everything that we always say) is to bracket that away for the next time. So let's *not* commit ourselves—*so this is what I said, it must've been true*. Let's, let's take the position—*well, this is what I said, and maybe it's true and maybe it's not; well, next time I might be better off, be better able to, to say that*. Which is, which is not to say I'm not believing what Agnes is saying or whatever, but, uh, but, but this is a process that we're trying to improve on, and what that if, if, if we accept that we're trying to improve on it, that must, that *has to mean* we're not very good at it now because, because we are improving!

26:16 Agnes: I definitely can accept that [Agnes laughs] [RTH laughs: Okay.], this is hard. Like I, I thought I had, it's, it's just also as an aside, um, it's remarkable how much I have forgotten since the moment. Like, even though I tried to make better notes this time, like it was hard to answer those questions. Like, especially Michael's questions like about the last one. And yeah. So even though I think my notes have improved from last time, it's still very hard, even though this was only a few hours ago [Agnes laughs].

26:47 RTH: So I, I thought in general Michael's questions were pretty good except that I, I wouldn't have asked the stream of questions about what *was it like before the beep*. And the reason that I wouldn't have asked that is not because I'm not particularly interested in that, but, but, but because I *don't want* Agnes to worry about what's going on before the beep for future beeps or future sampling days. That is part of, part of the simplification skill of DES is *let's just focus on this and let's not worry about that other stuff*. And, and so when Michael asked about what I would call the other stuff that weakened, that, that made it, that makes going forwards *more difficult* for Agnes because now she thinks he has to keep track of stuff that's not right at the moment of the beep. So there, there is stuff that's before the beep and there's stuff that's after the beep and there's stuff that's context and there's stuff that's reaction to the beep and there's stuff all, all, all different kinds of stuff. And DES is about, *let's not worry about any of that stuff* except what's going on that seems to be caught in flight by the beep. And the more, the more single-minded we can be about that, the easier the DES task is. And I think the more fidelity we can get about that portion of it, we won't get all the rest of it because we're not paying attention to it.

28:06 RTH: On to number 3?

Sample 2.3 discussion starts here

28:08 Agnes: Yeah. So, um, now I am sitting outside on my deck and I am reading from my remarkable paper tablet [laughs]. And um, I'm actually reading a paper for the workshop. I'm reading John Dunne's paper and I had just highlighted a sentence. Um, the sentence is, "an interaction with a stimulus creates an object form in the subsequent moment, which is non-conceptual awareness. And then under the right conditions, a conceptualization of the object form is constructed." I had, um, that

sentence I had just highlighted. And I had just read the, the next sentence after that, but it wasn't entirely connecting, like it, like I just wasn't understanding what was going on. Um, so when, like in the moment before the beep, my mind was just kind of blank [laughs], like in terms of my cognition. Like there was kind of just like a nothingness there. Um, but I was seeing, like, I was seeing that highlighted passage, um, in much the same way that I was seeing the highlighted passage in the previous beep. Um, but I was not, I was definitely not reading it anymore. Like I had already read it and I wasn't reading it. I was kind of, I had, I had read it and I had read the next sentence and there was like a confusion in my mind because I didn't quite get it.

28:08

Russ comments: RE "in the moment before the beep"

I'm quite sure that Agnes means by "in the moment before the beep" the same thing that I call "the last undisturbed moment before the beep" or "one microsecond before the beep," or (and this is one of my preferred usages) "the moment of the beep," or (and this is the other of my preferred usages) "the moment caught in flight by the beep." I don't much care about the particular language people use, so I did not initiate a conversation about this, but here I take the opportunity to notice that "before," or even "right before," is a pretty meaningless term. One could fairly say, for example, that the Pleistocene epoch is "right before" the Holocene epoch, in which case the "right beforeness" is some unspecifiable number of thousands of years.

Agnes comments: Yes, that is what I meant by "the moment before the beep" in this context.

29:47 RTH:

So let me see whether I, I understand that. I am, at the moment of the beep, I am *seeing* the highlighted passage, but my intended intention, I guess you could say, has moved beyond that to the next sentence. But I am not yet absorbing that sentence. So it doesn't feel, even to me, it doesn't even feel like I'm reading that sentence. I'm trying to read that sentence. I'm [Agnes: Exactly.] in some way aimed, some way aimed at that sentence, but it hasn't yet materialized in a way for me. [Agnes: Yes.] And so I feel, I feel a blankness aimed at a sentence that I can't even tell you what the sentence is. It hasn't, it hasn't yet penetrated me. Is that right?

30:35 Agnes:

Yes. The only way I would modify what you just said is that the blankness, um, wasn't specifically aimed at the next sentence. It was aimed more at the, what I was reading, like the, um, maybe the space between the two sentences, [laughs], metaphorically speaking.

31:03 RTH:

So I'm, the blankness is, I'm not understanding this, I'm not grokking what is being laid out for me.

31:12 Agnes:

Exactly. -[RTH: Something like that.] Exactly. It's like when you, okay, maybe not when you, when I read, when I read something and I'm not understanding it, there's just this like, like when you read something and you understand it, there's this feeling of like, yes, but it's the, the absence of that feeling, you're reading a bunch of

words and you kind of know what all the words mean, but the meaning of the whole thing isn't coming together.

- 31:36 RTH: Okay. And, and is it my sense that I am processing this after the highlighted sentence? My eyeballs are tracking this next sentence and my neurons are doing that, but I'm, but I, but, but I have not yet experientially taken it in yet.
- 32:00 Agnes: What's the *it*?
- 32:05 RTH: So what I got out of your original salvo was that I had highlighted this passage and I was now some, some verb that I'm not exactly sure what it is—considering, reading, aimed at,, looking at something—the next sentence. It's not like I've stopped, I have, I have proceeded onwards to the next sentence, but it, it seems like it's short of reading that in, in my experiential comprehension mode. I might be reading it in my processing mode or something like that. And I guess that's what I want to know. Does it, so does it seem like I am continuing on, but my experience has not yet kept up with my continuing, I guess, something like that?
- 32:59 Agnes: So I had just read the sentence after the highlighted sentence, and I was kind of going back like I hadn't understood and I was sort of getting caught in between, like caught in the moment of trying to figure out what to do next to fix my misunderstanding. So I mean, I'm, I'm not confident about precisely whether this is the case, but my best way of putting this into words was: in that moment I was feeling that I didn't understand, I was feeling that I, um, that it's not yet time to proceed past that passage, that I needed to either reread the highlighted passage and then the next one or just the next one. I was kind of in between, I, I was in this moment of indecision of what to do next, given that I don't understand.
- 33:56 RTH: So, so far we haven't talked at all about what the next sentence *is*. And I'm guessing, I guess, or wondering whether that's because we haven't yet figured out what that next sentence is. That's the, that's the problem here. That's what we,
- 34:09 Agnes: So I didn't write down the next sentence. Um, yeah, I didn't write, I didn't write, I wrote down the highlighted sentence. I didn't write down the next sentence. So maybe a question is, should I have written down the next sentence? Um,
- 34:30 RTH: Well that's depends on what, what's, what you've experienced. If, if you could, it would be perfectly okay if you were, if you were saying to me, "I don't know what my eyeballs are doing, cuz that wasn't in my experience. What was in my experience was: I don't understand this. I'm trying to figure out what to do next. And that's all. [Agnes: Yeah, exactly.] That's all there was."
- 34:50 Agnes: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Exactly. [RTH: Okay.] Yeah. So I think that's why I didn't write it down, because it wasn't in my experience.
- 34:57 RTH: Okay. But also I am gathering that it's not true that my experience, my experience is that I have *stopped* reading. I don't experience myself as reading, but I don't experience myself as having *stopped* reading either. Is that right?

- 35:15 Agnes: It depends on what you mean by stopped reading [Agnes laughs]. Um, I was not in the moment before the beep in the moment before my experienced moment of the beep, um, I was not actively reading. Um, so in that sense I had maybe taken a pause in my reading or something like that. [RTH: Okay.] But I hadn't stopped reading as in, *okay, I'm done with this now*. I'm about, like, I was about to continue reading [Agnes laughs]. [RTH: Okay.]
- 35:46 RTH: So it's,
- 35:46 MD: Can I ask, sorry, go ahead.
- 35:48 RTH: Go for it.
- 35:50 MD: Um, well, I, I wanted to ask about the, so you originally described your state of mind as blank, and then, and then subsequently you've used a lot of adjectives that seemed like they were describing a mind that's not blank. And so I, I was trying to put, I was trying to square that circle a little bit and, um. Us it, so when you said blank, maybe, maybe what you meant is, and if this obviously as y'know, if this isn't right, tell me that's not right. But my way of squaring that circle was to say, *well, she doesn't have a meaning that she's attaching to the sentence that she's just read*. So that's the blank part, but then there's something else going on. I you described it once as lack of understanding, um, or realizing that you didn't understand, or realizing that you needed to go back. So can you just help me out there understanding those two things, the blankness and then these various other ways you had to descr-, of describing how you felt in the moment?
- 36:52 Agnes: Okay. So I guess, um, this is where, like, I think we're coming up to the limits of what I feel like I know because my initial characterization of my mind as being blank was like, that's how I had characterized it in the moment. Um, when Russ asked me those questions, um, and my responses to his questions are, I believe, like in the kind of DES process of asking questions, maybe like I had characterized my mind as having been blank. And now I would say that, um, in being asked those questions, I'm realizing, *oh, in fact my mind wasn't blank*. There was, instead it was this kind of confusion that was going on. However, all that being said, I'm feeling very aware of [laughs], um, the fact that that may not be true, that I could just be confabulating right now. Right? Like I, maybe it was just blank, but that what Russ asked me fits my story about what was going on. And so then I said, *yes, that sounds good*. And like I, I don't feel like I'm in a position to accurately discriminate between those two options.
- 38:17 MD: Okay, that's fine. Yeah. And they could both be true, right? [laughs] somehow [laughs].
- 38:25 Agnes: I think so. Like, I mean, I think they could both be true. I also think it could be true that, like, this is the other thing that I think could be true: that the moment before, the moment before the beep there was what that my answer to Russ's question was true. I mean, I think certainly at some point before the beep something like that was

going on. I'm maybe not certain certain, but I feel reasonably confident that that was that kind of thing *was* going on. Um, it's possible that there was what I described in response to Russ's questions, like at time T minus two [laughs], um, where t is like the beep. And then at time T minus one, it was just a blankness. And maybe there was like a continuous, like, like I'm, I'm maybe there was kind of like the, the confusion was blending into the blankness. Like I, I'm not sure I can discriminate between all those options.

39:22 MD: Fine.

39:24 RTH: So I would say I agree with fine, but I would, I, I would say it's *much better* than fine. And that, and that is that Russ can ask questions that come outta his presuppositional bag and Michael can ask that come outta his presuppositional bag and whatever. And, and Agnes has to learn to resist those and, and resist her own too. I mean we're, we're all, I think, uh, the, the aim of DES is, is for all of us to, to try to get at to what's, what Agnes's experience was at the moment of the beep. And we can ask questions which might help her, and we can also ask questions that might make it more difficult for her. And, and our object is obviously to ask helpful questions, but we're, we're less than perfect. And, and, and so the, the main object is really for her to hear the kinds of questions that Russ, out of his imperfection, might ask, and Michael, out of his imperfections, might ask and, and guard against them if that's necessary to protect her own experience next time so that she can, if she has a similar, similar kind of situation, she can be more adequately aimed *at her own* experience and put it into words that rests lightly on her experience regardless of what Russ has asked or what Michael has asked or whatever.

40:53 And it's, it's short of perfection. We're all, we're all definitely short of perfection. We're trying to get better at it so that next time we can be better at it than we can this time. And as I was logging in, I heard Yun-Ying asking something about how the iterative process works, and this is a good example of it. And, uh, we, we are all trying to refine our, our ability to help Agnes grasp, apprehend whatever words you wanna use for that, what her experience was at the moment of the beep. And, and tell us about it in response to our questions and hold and hold her ground if we, if we push in the wrong direction.

41:41 Agnes: And it's hard. I mean, what I, one thing I've found is just when the beep goes off, I find it really hard a lot of the time to go, okay, what was I experiencing then? Like, so, so that itself already is a challenge I find a lot of the time.

42:00 RTH: Well, blindness is particularly hard, I think because when it, it's like when you've lost something, it, it's a lot easier to find something than it is to find, than to not find something because if you don't find something you have to keep looking for it. But, uh, the, and, and it could very well be that Agnes's experiences is of the sort that does not easily say, *well this is when, this is when the beep was*. Oth-, other people find that easy, and some people don't. And we're gonna figure that out. On to number 4?

42:00 Russ comments: I note that Agnes did not have particular difficulty when describing sample 2.1: She declaratively described her innerly saying "Wallace: Sa" when

interrupted by the beep. I conclude that Agnes's difficulty is not a general lack of verbal skill, nor a particularly high bar for noticing what counts as being experienced. Instead, some *experiences* are more difficult to grasp than others, and that likely more a characteristic *of the experiences*, not of language or method.

Agnes comments: Yes, I agree with this comment.

Sample 2.4 discussion starts here

42:36 Agnes: Okay. So number 4 is another example of one that like was very difficult for me, [laughs]. So, um, I was now sitting outside and having my breakfast and I had just been thinking about the fact that the beeper was gonna beep soon [laughs] because it hadn't gone off in quite some time. And I, I was already like, not, I, I don't wanna say stressed, but as I was cooking my breakfast (cuz I was making eggs), I was al-, I was thinking already like, I hope the beeper doesn't go off and interrupt me in this moment! [laughs]. So the, the beeper was already kind of in my mind and um, like a few moments before the beep, I was just sort of sitting there and enjoying the sun and eating my food and going, Hmm. But then like, um, but then I started having these kind of thoughts about like, if the beeper went off now, how would I describe [Agnes laughs] my experience like that.

43:31 Like I was having these kinds of thoughts and then maybe there were even like some preliminary descriptions, um, but then when the beeper in fact went off, like I really had no idea what I had just experienced in that moment. So what I'm describing, like what was certainly in my experience, what, like, there was some kind of visual experience. Like I, I believe I was like seeing, seeing the food. Um, and then there was stuff going on in my mind in the neighborhood of what I just told you about. Like, um, if the beeper goes off, what will I say now? I hope the beeper doesn't go off right now. There, there was like a bit of like, I hope the beeper doesn't go off right now cuz I don't even know what I'm experiencing right now, [laughs]. Um, but then I had just kind of finished thinking those things and then the beeper went off. So anyway, all this is just to say like, I know this is very like mangled, um, but I, I genuinely, when the beeper went off, I was not clear about what was going on in my experience exactly at that moment. So like everything I've said is sort of maybe a couple moments before the beep. When the beeper went off, it was unclear. Like I, I had a hard time kind of homing in on the precise experience.

45:00 MD: So the, at one point in that you said that you definitely had a visual experience of the food, but was that, was that at the moment of the beep or were you still describing what was happening like before, before the moment before [laughs]?

45:00 Russ comments: RE "you said that you definitely had a visual experience of the food"

I think that substantially cleans up what Agnes said, and I think that such cleaning up generally makes it difficult to live in the world of uncertainty, which is where we want to live until we are convinced that Agnes is grasping her experience with fidelity.

Agnes' entire turn, which is 2.5 minutes long (which is a very long turn) is about the fact that she's not sure what was experienced. Embedded in there is a brief comment about visual experience, and I will highlight the subjunctifiers:

So what I'm describing, like what was certainly in my experience, what, like, there was some kind of visual experience. Like I, I believe I was like seeing, seeing the food.

I happily accept that one could take the "what was certainly in my experience" as an expression of "definitely," but the remainder of her turn, and the contribution of her grammar producer, is to argue against that. I'm no mind reader, but I don't think it's fair to focus on one aspect without the other.

Furthermore, I think it is fairly easy to go from uncertainty today to certainty tomorrow (as one learns to be more careful at the moment of the beep), but it is very difficult to go from certainty today to uncertainty tomorrow (because that will require contradicting what we said or did today).

Agnes comments: RE: "I think it is fairly easy to go from uncertainty today to certainty tomorrow (as one learns to be more careful at the moment of the beep), but it is very difficult to go from certainty today to uncertainty tomorrow (because that will require contradicting what we said or did today)."

Yes, I agree with this, and I agree with the characterization of what was likely happening.

45:20 Agnes: I think the moment before the beep, I would say that definitely there was some visual experience of the food like that. Like I'm, I, I feel confident that the, the last undisturbed moment before the beep contained my visual experience of the food, because throughout that whole process, the, the visual experience of the food was part of my experience. Um, so that part I feel reasonably confident that there *was* a visual experience. Um, the other stuff, like the other, what else was going on in my head, that's the part that I feel extremely uncertain about and maybe, yeah, like extremely uncertain.

45:20 Russ comments: In my hearing, that makes it *less* likely that there was a directly apprehended visual experience of food. First, there is quite a bit of subjunctification, beginning with *I think* and *I would say*.

Second, the whole turn is an *inference*, not an *apprehension*. This turn says, to my ear: I had visual experience of the food throughout that time period, *so therefore* I had visual experience at the moment of the beep. DES does *not* admit inference, no matter how plausible or reasonable it might seem.

Third, here's what a description of directly apprehended visual experience of food sounds like: "At the moment of the beep I was seeing the yellow yolk of my soft-boiled egg run up against the sausage." That is, if at the moment of the beep she is experientially, directly apprehendedly seeing, her description will be of *what she sees*, will aim directly at the food she sees.

By contrast, what she *said* was "the visual experience of the food was part of my experience" which is a meta-description of Agnes's process; that talk aims *away* from what she sees and at some abstraction (visual experience as a construct).

The distinction between generality and specificity is important. It's the difference between person A who says *Participating in elections is a patriotic*

responsibility and person B who says *I waited in line in the rain for two hours to vote for Trump*. Person A may or may not be saying they voted; Person B is saying they voted.

In sum: I'm no mind reader, and therefore I think we are not in a position to know whether Agnes was, in a directly apprehending sense, seeing something food-related at the moment of the beep.

Agnes comments: Yes, I agree, and this is helpful!

- 46:12 MD: Okay. Um, so I'm probably not gonna clear up your uncertainty, but let, but let me ask a couple of questions and see if I can just get clear, um, for myself. So you, you obviously at some point you remembered these thoughts, like, *I hope it doesn't go off*, or *what will I say if it goes off* and that sort of thing. Do you, were were, was were the, was that a memory that was post beep? Or, or, or, well actually, let me back up before I ask this question about memory. So you, let me just make sure I understood. You definitely were no, no longer saying those things to yourself in the moment before the beep. Like you had stopped saying those things. Is that correct?
- 46:56 Agnes: I'm not sure. Okay. Like, like I'm not sure whether I was still say like, I'm not sure what exactly was going on in the moment before the beep. I guess my best, my best guess, and I dunno if maybe this is where you were gonna go, is that the moment before, the moment before the beep, there wasn't this like clear, simple thing going on. There were almost like multiple things gra- grasping for my attention, almost. [MD: Okay.] And then my best guess is that when the beeper went off, those things were somehow present to me still. Like I, like I think those things were somehow present to me, but I don't think I'm able to like accurately say anything more than that. And even that I'm unsure about.
- 47:44 MD: Okay. So, so, so I, I uh, Ru-, Russ may have some better ideas about how to pursue this and I'm gonna hopefully get him to tell us what those are in a second. But let me give, take one shot at one thing that maybe is helpful, and that is without, without intending that you answer this multiple choice question [laughs], um, I, I'm curious to know whether these choices are at least in like reasonable choices in your mind for potentially having captured it if you had been thinking, y'know, if you had had them in front of you at the moment or whether there's other choices that I'm not getting that would potentially be descriptions even though we're not able to classify this particular beep in one of these ways.
- 48:28 So one, one might be that you have some kind of memory or recollection of just having had various thoughts like *I hope it doesn't go off*, or *what will I say when it goes off*? Or things like that.
- 48:40 Another might be that you have like a feeling like it's a feeling, uh, uh, or something like that, rather than a memory. It's more like a Yeah, I'm just gonna call it a feeling and let you tell me what that means for you. Um, I, I, that that's not much of a multiple-choice question actually. Those are the two best options I can think of.
- 48:59 Agnes: Well, those are two choices.

49:00 MD: Are those even potentially, [Agnes: That's multiple.] My question is this, so are those even potentially descriptions of what you might have been feeling if you had been able to classify it? Or are they, [Agnes: Yeah.] or they like totally outta the ballpark and are there other things like that that may be classifiers that I didn't say?

49:18 Agnes: Yeah, so I think both of those are plausible, actually. I mean, like, I think the feeling one was the one that I gravitated more towards. Like I think my, this, what had been happening was partly this feeling like this kind of low-level agitation within me because I was extremely self-conscious that like this beep might go off and I better have something to say and I'd better be paying attention! Um, and I didn't like the fact that I was not [laughs], like I was not having like the experience that one should be having [they laugh]. Like, and, and I, I know that this is, I know there is no one experience that one should be having, but it was like, it was kind of like this self-consciousness accompanied by this feeling of like agita-, like low, not high agitation, very low-level agitation. [MD: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] But that's so, so I guess to, to answer your question, like probably there was some kind of feeling associated with it, some sort of like aaauugh [she grunts] *this is not okay* feeling [laughs].

49:18 Russ comments: RE "both of those are plausible"

(This is really an extension of the second part of my comment at 45:20.) The aim of DES is to distinguish between the directly apprehended experience and all else, and then to cleave to the directly apprehended experience. The plausible and the reasonable are the enemies of the directly apprehended. The iterative aim of DES is to practice the distinction between direct apprehension and all else, and then to eschew the *all else*.

DES rests on two cleavings (see my comment at 32:42 in Agnes interview 1): cleaving to the moment of the beep and cleaving to directly apprehended experience. Those are both skills that need to be acquired, and they are designed to simplify the DES task: we need to attend to what's going on at *this* moment and no other, and we need to attend to what is directly apprehended and nothing else. The aim of the early interviews (all interviews, really) is to help Agnes get better at both those cleavings. Part of that getting-better-ness is developing the trust that Russ and Michael will not ask about anything else, so that Agnes doesn't need to worry about anything else.

50:28 MD: Well, I, I, like I said, I wasn't really asking you to classify the actual experience that you had, but just wondering whether those were, even if I was close enough to understanding that those were even options, um, without landing on one part particular.

50:40 Agnes: And then the memory one could well be an option as well. Y'know, like I, I, I wouldn't rule that out either. Um,

50:48 MD: Um, but I think I've exhausted my ability to ask meaningful questions about what you said Agnes, so I'm I'm going to,

50:53 Agnes: Sorry, this is like very

50:55 MD: No, it's, I, I'm, I'm totally inexperienced at this and so I, I, I don't know how to react to what you said.

51:03 RTH: So now it's my turn. So, [MD: Yes.] so what I would say, [coughs] I'm sorry about that. The, the most confident that I've heard Agnes was if one could rewind the tape, it was, was when she was saying, "well, I don't really know what was going on here." She'd, she'd given a, an account of what might have been going on and, and when she had this, I just, "I just really don't know." And when she talked like that, I found that believable. I, and then, and then what I've, what I, what I would say is everything that I've heard other than that seems like it's in the realm of plausibility. Like it seems pretty likely, y'know, my eyes were open and I was seeing the, I was seeing the breakfast, so I was probably seeing the breakfast at the, at the time of the beep, and I had been thinking about that and that was probably there at the moment of the beep, too.

52:00 RTH: And, and so there's the, what is actually grasped at the moment of the beep and what is plausibly going on at the moment of the beep. I would like us to keep those things separate. And I would much prefer, an *I don't know* as an answer (forever, actually) if we can't distinguish between what was plausibly there and what was actually being experienced.

52:22 And, and so what I, what I would, what I would say is that in this situation, I would find myself much more wanting to console Agnes or to stand on Agnes's side or, or, or recognize that, that recognize the difficulty of this task rather than trying to, trying to sort through one plausibility or another, because the, the sorting through one plausibility or another is going to, uh, convey to Agnes that I'm interested in her plausibility opinions rather than her trying to simply apprehend what's going on in the moment of the beep.

53:16 And I think that, I think that is, that is a difficult, it is a difficult thing for, I would say most of my students find it very difficult when I say, y'know, it sounds like I'm asking questions about the, about yesterday's beep or this morning's beep, but I'm *really* thinking about tomorrow. I'm, I'm, I'm, I want Agnes to be happy if, if the, if she, if she gets, if the beep happens and the best she can do is to say, *well, I don't really know what was going on at the moment of the beep*, that's a good answer as far as I'm concerned. If that's the, if that's the way it is, that's the, that is the best answer. And I wanna be, I wanna convey myself as being 100% on the side of that answer, not 95% on the side of that answer, but 100% on the side of that answer.

54:04 I want, I want us to be able to figure out, I want us, I want us to be able at some future time to get into a position where Agnes can say: this is what I was experiencing at the moment of the beep, *or* I don't what I was experiencing at the moment of the beep, or there was nothing going on at the moment of the beep, and have that be any one of those, any one of those options be okay with Agnes. And that is far preferable to me than trying to figure out what is plausibly at the moment of this particular beep. And those strike me as being very different intentions or whatever.

54:04 Russ comments: That is RTH's on-the-fly version of Russ's comment at 49:18.

54:45 MD: So can I, can I ask a quick question about that? [RTH: Sure.] Um, so I, I guess one of the reasons I was offering the options was what I, one of the things I was hoping, one of the outcomes, one of the responses that would've felt informative to me is if she would've said, oh no, def-, I don't know what it was, but it was definitely not a memory or I don't know what it was, but it was definitely not a feeling or whatever it feel. Now maybe if you, if you remove one possibility from infinite possibilities, you learn nothing. I don't know. But it, it, I feel like I would've learned something. I feel like I did learn something even from her reaction that was like, well, yeah, maybe it was a feeling, maybe it was a memory. So I, I, I guess I was trying to do that in a way that allowed her to say it was neither of those, it was both of those, I don't know what it was or whatever, and still have that be an acceptable answer. But maybe I, maybe it was maybe I still gave the impression that what I was really hoping for was for her to answer the question in some positive way, which is wasn't my intention, but I may have given that impression.

55:58 And I, I guess I'm curious if you think there's any value to her, would've, would've been an, I mean she didn't really say yes, it was definitely not a memory or was definitely not a feeling or something like that. Would've that, would that have been a valuable thing to learn? What do you think we would've learned something about her experience if she, if she had been able to say, *Oh no, Michael, it was definitely not a feeling* like when I offered that as an option, would that have, would we, would we have learned something there or would that have, would not have been informative.

55:58 Russ comments: RE "I feel like I would've learned something" and "Do you think we would've learned something about her experience"

Our learning something about Agnes's experience is *not* the main intention of the DES interviews. I sometimes say that *DES is iterative all the way down*, by which I mean our intention is to help Agnes get into a position to tell us about her experience in such a way that it would not occur to us to wonder whether we have learned something. If we are wondering, then we are in the realm of plausibility, not direct apprehension.

The interviews should help Agnes orient herself to her own directly-apprehended-at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience, and nothing else (not theory, not self-presentation, not context, not before-the-beep, not after-the-beep, not what she thinks Russ wants to know, not what she thinks Michael wants to know, not....).

A big part of that is that for that to be possible, Agnes has to come to believe that Russ and Michael are themselves committed to helping Agnes orient herself to her own directly-apprehended-at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience, and nothing else. That's what RTH meant when he said "console Agnes or to stand on Agnes's side" at 52:22.

A big part of that is that Russ and Michael should indeed be committed to helping Agnes orient herself to her own directly-apprehended-at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience, and nothing else.

None of that requires perfection. Commitment is a human endeavor, and humans are not perfect.

56:32 RTH: Well, we would've had to figure out what she meant by feeling and all of that, which we might have been able to do.

56:36 MD: Of course. Yeah. Yeah.

56:39 RTH: Uh, [RTH coughs] so I didn't, I didn't actually object to the question that you asked. I thought the question was okay. [MD: Okay,] What, what I, what I would've wanted to be more, and I think I did, I did eventually do it, but I wanna, I would wanna be, I, I would want the fact that Agnes had trouble with the question to be *a good thing for Agnes*.

57:01 MD: Okay, okay that's fine.

57:03 RTH: That's so I, so I might su-, might, and, and, and you did, did suggest a sort of a multiple choice option, and I have, I didn't object to the suggestion of the multiple choice option as long as the, the third choice is, or, *or this question doesn't make sense or this question you, you're not yet in a position to answer and there may be never been a position to answer all that, all that stuff*. As, as long as all that stuff is, uh, wholeheartedly understood option E on the multiple choice test or whatever. [MD: Right.] Then, then I didn't, I I don't object to the multiple choice of it.

57:43 MD: Okay. That's, that's super helpful. Thank you.

57:48 RTH: So it is now, we are now at one hour, so I would say we probably ought to call this a day here and uh,

57:58 Agnes: Yun-Ying has a hand.

57:58 Russ comments: Yun-Ying has raised Zoom's hand emoji, which doesn't appear in the video. Raising the hand did cause the Zoom windows to rearrange.

58:00 Y-YK: Can I have one last question to ask Agnes? [Agnes: Yes!] What did you do like before your first interview experience and then to this day? Like what did you do to adjust between the two experiences? Because you mentioned about in beep 4 you are like trying to predicting, and you feel like a bit like trying to figuring out what you are feeling right now. And Russ say with, our goal is to help you protecting your experiences. And what did you do like for your first like, day of being experienced and today, like when you are experiences your beepers?

58:42 Agnes: So I didn't really do anything. I mean, when we, so this, okay, when we had our first session, I mean, I learned some stuff because that's the, the point of this is to learn some stuff through the questions that I got. Um, my awareness of like my kind of hyper-awareness that the beep might be going off, um, wasn't really a product of the last conversation we had or anything like that. I felt, I felt that way many times in this process. [laughs] like, I mean there like I'd say it's like 50-50 actually. I don't know that, that this is a claim that maybe I'm not allowed to make. But, um, I, I find myself often being aware of the beeper and like, *what if the beep goes off now?* And I think that might just be an Agnes thing, cuz I'm pretty sure Michael, when he was

wearing the beepers said, oh, I just randomly forget that I wear it. Whereas I sometimes forget. But mostly I'm kind of, I don't know, I feel like I'm aware and I'm thinking about like, what if the beep goes off now be ready. But that's not because of the experience of the interviews previously. It's just an Agnes thing, I think.

59:50 Y-YK: Okay, thank you.

59:59 RTH: So I think Agnes's interview situation is in some ways more complicated than Michael's was. Agnes has the prospect of Agnes, is that third one is gonna be a public interview, and I suspect that is colored in some way the whole, the whole deal.

1:00:15 Agnes: Well, yeah, I, I think part of it is like, am I having an experience that's gonna be weird in some way that I'm gonna be then discussing with like potentially these people I don't know. [laughs], like, I mean, I mean like I'd be happy if it was just you guys and like including Yun-Ying, cuz I know Yun-Ying, that would be fine, but some of these people at the workshop are strangers to me. And so I feel self-conscious about even just revealing like the stupid stuff that I'm thinking about or writing about or whatever. So I think that's, yeah, I think that's certainly part of it.

1:00:15 Russ comments: I can say with pretty much authority that anyone who thinks Agnes's stuff is stupid is fundamentally ignorant (or, more accurately, delusional) about their own inner experience and that of others. I accept that there are a lot of people like that.

1:00:46 RTH: So then that's that, that says sort of in spades what I, what I would like us to be transmitting to Agnes as best we can that we're on Agnes's side here. That this is, this is a complicated situation and, and ag-, we want Agnes to describe her experience, and if Agnes is, has difficulty doing that, we want to be allies of Agnes in this process. Not, I, I don't think I was saying that from the standpoint of, *well, the next interview is gonna be public*, but, but it's definitely true from that, from that perspective. And so that probably filtered into *my* thinking as well. So, but the, but what the, what I think I was saying was a general principle regardless of what the next interview, what, what the next interview.

1:01:39 MD: That's how I understood it when you said it, but it makes sense that there's this additional element. Um, well Agnes, if it makes you feel any better between now and then, we'll announce to everyone in the workshop the link to the now public website with all of my stuff. So I can be your, I can be your partner in weirdness if you want. [they laugh]

1:01:58 Agnes: Sounds good. Partners in weirdness. [they laugh]

1:02:03 RTH: And, and, and, and I, I would say that in all of the sampling, there's been the option that I declined to say something about this sample. *And* you should, you should have the option to say, I, I decline to participate in the whole deal. That's, that should be an up to the last minute. You should have that right whenever, whenever you wanna invoke that right. And we can, we can figure out something else to do in

those hours on Saturday morning if, if you prefer not to do this. I mean, we can have,

1:02:34 Agnes: It's fine. It's more of just like, um, it's not, it's not about the process itself. It's about like, am I in this moment? Am I like thinking or doing something that would be perceived as weird by other people? [Agnes laughs], y'know. And that's just like an ag, I mean, maybe not just an Agnes thing, it's maybe probably a lot of people I guess. But like, um, being conscious of what other people think of me and like potentially being weird [laughs] in various ways.

1:03:01 MD: So I guess if, if it helps, I'll, I'll, I I think I, I'll, I don't know if this'll help you or not, but what helps me is if I just say, if I just acknowledge that the answer to that question is Yes. [they laugh] Like just accept in advance that someone's gonna hear that and say, that's weird, [MD laughs]. And, and then you think to yourself, and that's fine because if they were doing it, they would be in the same exact position.

1:03:28 Agnes: Well, easier said than done Michael. [they laugh]

1:03:35 RTH: I, the, the, the way I would respond to that is, is we're not shooting for perfection here. We're shooting for trying to, trying to be pretty good at it and being more or less honest about when we fall short and why we fall short and what, what the, what those possibilities are. And that what we're gonna do, what, what we are going to do on Saturday, assuming that we actually *do* it on Saturday, is going to be a useful exercise for somebody in that room, or who, who watches it on the video. If we watch, if we put that on the video. It might not be a useful exercise for everybody in that room. And it might not be even a useful exercise for anybody except that one person in the room. But there's gonna be one person who's for whom it's gonna be helpful. And, uh, I don't know who that is, but that's just, that's just the way, the way the world is. We're gonna, we're gonna do something that we hope is going to be useful for somebody and the chances are good, it is.

1:03:35 Russ comments: I consider Søren Kierkegaard to be an important influence on me and my work. This is from the first paragraph of the Preface to his little book *Purity of Heart is To Will One Thing*:

[This book] is in search of that solitary "individual," to whom it wholly abandons itself, by whom it wishes to be received as if it had arisen within his own heart; that solitary "individual" whom with joy and gratitude I call my reader; that solitary "individual" who reads willingly and slowly, who reads over and over again, and who reads aloud -- for his own sake. If it finds him, then in the distance of the separation the understanding is perfect, if he retains for himself both the distance and the understanding in the inwardness of appropriation.

The rest of the Preface is worth reading: <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/preface-65/>

1:04:37 Agnes: And I'm happy to do it. And it's super interesting. Like I'm, I'm enjoying this process. It's just more of a, the thing that I'm self-conscious about isn't like the actual question/answer part. It's like the actual experience itself. But it's fine. It's like a, I

know that I'm not, um, it's just, it's fine. Maybe that's just the way to put it. It's not a big deal. [laughs]

1:05:02 RTH: Okay. All right. Anything else we should be talking about before we, uh, adjourn here?

1:05:07 Agnes: I don't think so.

1:05:07 Agnes comments: Overall, I have found being the subject of DES, paired with Russ's comments, to be extremely illuminating — particularly in helping me to appreciate some of Russ's comments when we were interviewing Michael. So: thank you for this opportunity!