

After the eighth sampling day, we discontinued sampling with Gualtiero primarily because RTH and Gualtiero thought it would be wise for RTH and Gualtiero to conduct joint DES interviews with a separate participant (Evan). Thereafter, Russ wrote a description of Gualtiero's experiences as revealed in the samples and passed that description to Gualtiero, who made some editorial suggestions that Russ did not find controversial; the result is the document below. However, they reached an impasse in the description of one aspect. The document below leaves both sides of the impasse explicitly stated—with what Russ wrote about it printed in green and what Gualtiero wrote printed in blue. We agreed to sample again after an interlude, an exercise that might (or might not) shed some light on the impasse.

Gualtiero Piccinini

Description of DES Results as of Sampling Day 8

Gualtiero is a professional philosopher of mind who came into sampling believing himself to have anendophasia (no inner speech) and aphantasia (no inner images). He understood his anendophasia as the (almost complete) absence of *spontaneous* inner speech while retaining *intentional* inner speech (as when attempting to retain a telephone number). He understood his aphantasia as the complete inability to generate vivid images while awake, either spontaneous or intentional. Both those expectations were corroborated by sampling in the sense that he did not have any samples that involved inner speech and only one sample that involved inner images, and that one occurred when the beep woke him while napping. (It should be said that RTH is skeptical that anendophasia and aphantasia—or any other absence-by-definition characteristic—are productive ways of thinking about inner experience.)

We discussed 31 samples (omitting, as is usual in DES studies, the 5 first-day samples) across 8 sampling days (7 days excluding the first day). In addition, there were 6 samples (excluding 1 on the first day) when Gualtiero was asleep (so a grand total of $31 + 5 + 6 + 1 = 43$ samples).

Gualtiero's directly apprehended inner experience was nearly always multiple in the sense that there were several—usually two to four—separable if not separate simultaneous directly apprehended inner experiences ongoing. For example:

Sample 4.3: [Gualtiero is washing his hands in the sink]. He (60%) both sees and feels the water against his moving hands. He recognizes himself to be the mover of the hands, but he has no separate experience of the agency. Simultaneously, he experiences (30%) singing; the words he is singing are faux-Italian or Italian-ish words that don't have any specific meaning.

Simultaneously, he (10%) experiences an echo of a previous thought (he doesn't recall the exact content, but it was in some way about DES or what he had to do today, which included a DES interview). (An echo is a recollection of having thought it, rather than thinking it again).

Roughly half of Gualtiero's samples involved the direct apprehension of some sort of thinking. These were approximately equally divided between (a) directly apprehended ongoing thinkings and (b) "echoes" of thinking—the direct apprehension of the recollection of a thinking that had already taken place. None of those thinkings (whether ongoing or echo) involved a clear content, and in most of them, the content was not at all or only very sketchily apprehendable—that is, Gualtiero frequently apprehended himself as thinking (this is direct apprehension, not inference), but the content of that thinking was usually not available to him. <<<The highlighted sentence is the RTH original; this is the sentence that Gualtiero objected to. We show the discussion of this sentence at the end of this document.>>>

Occasionally (but not often) he had a general sense of the content, for example, Sample 4.3's something about what he had to do today. Here is an example at the clear end of Gualtiero's thinking:

Sample 5.4 [Gualtiero is doing exercise warm-ups.] He has two experiences. (1) He (65%) feels increasing pressure in his left hip; and (2) He is (35%) thinking, or perhaps recalling thinking (an "echo"?—that dividing line is not perfectly clear) about his charitable donations—in the ballpark of preferring to donate to the Ukraine help-the-soldiers fund than the Gaza food relief, that the Ukrainians are helping themselves; that the Gaza aid is about survival. All these aspects are somehow present, *not* in words, *not* any specific aspect. (This thinking experience is relatively well-defined by comparison to not-sure-about-content characteristic of much of his thinking.)

The "echoes" of thinking were directly apprehended experiences of inchoate or sketchy memory residues of some previously experienced thinking. That is, the term "echo" seemed an apt metaphorical description: a real echo is directly experienced as an incomplete or degraded repetition of the original, where you don't hear the original, don't create the copy, and yet directly apprehend the degraded version as being a copy. Gualtiero's echoed thought was the direct apprehension of an ongoing-but-not-presently-being-thought thinking. Like most of his directly apprehended thinkings, Gualtiero did not recall the content of his echoed thinking.

(In RTH's DES practice, directly apprehending thinking without experiencing the content is rather rare; directly apprehending echoes of thinking is also rare.)

Gualtiero frequently spoke aloud, mostly (because sampling took place at his home) to his dog. This speaking was often in faux-Italian (Gualtiero is a native Italian speaker) made-up words. These utterances were experienced as taking place without intention, as if the words just rolled out unbidden. Occasionally Gualtiero was singing aloud; on these occasions, also, the singing seemed *not* intentional—in fact, while he was confident that the singing was ongoing, he was not certain that the singing was experienced, and he did not know the words he was singing.

In short, most of Gualtiero's experiences involved propositional elements (though sometimes the full content was not recalled), visual elements, sometimes bodily sensations, sometimes words without semantic meaning (e.g. faux-Italian words), sometimes meaningful words that were experienced for non-semantic characteristics. For example:

Sample 3.4 [Gualtiero is looking at the thermostat button that says *Heat*.] He sees *Heat* against the gray background of the thermostat. This is mostly a visual taking in (more like the shape of the word than the semantics of the word). [He understands the context, and perhaps has some semantic understanding of the situation, but the semantics is not at all or perhaps only slightly present.] (Simultaneously Gualtiero is singing aloud, but he doesn't know whether that is in his experience at all.)

That is, Gualtiero's experience of *Heat* is much more a visual perceptual experience—how *Heat* looks—than it is a semantic experience—what *Heat* means.

Gualtiero frequently experienced his body as a diffuse whole. For example:

Sample 7.4 Gualtiero's experience had three parts: 1. He is tasting peach. [He had licked his fingers after making a smoothie.] 2. He has a visual / proprioceptive experience of his body moving toward the counter. 3. He has the echo of having thought something a second or so earlier. [He doesn't know the content, but acknowledges that he may have known the content at the moment of the beep and subsequently forgot it.]

By a visual / proprioceptive experience in sample 7.4, we mean that he directly apprehended his body as moving towards, and he visually saw the environment as being passed through, but he had not singled out any particular aspect, either bodily or visually. That is, he was apprehending his body as moving, but was not attending particularly to his arms or feet or any other aspect—it was a diffuse experience of the entire bodily motion.

He was not particularly seeing the sink and moving toward it, did not see the sink any more or less than he saw the counter or the walls.

However, some of Gualtiero's bodily experiences were of specific aspects of his body. An example is sample 5.4 above (where he felt pressure in his hip while thinking something about donating to Ukraine or Gaza).

(In RTH's DES practice, the kind of diffuse bodily apprehension that was common for Gualtiero is fairly rare in other participants. Gualtiero understood his diffuse bodily and visual non-specificity as being the result of 30+ years of daily tai-chi practice. RTH sees that as a reasonable speculation, but would require longitudinal studies before crediting such speculation. For example, it is possible that Gualtiero was attracted to tai chi *because he already had* frequent diffuse bodily experience. RTH does not credit that speculation either, but prefers to withhold speculation of either or any kind.)

Gualtiero had frequent visual experiences where he saw the external world. These seeings were most often diffuse or general, rather than of any particular object in the world. See for example Sample 7.4 (moving toward the counter) above. (Gualtiero attributes this, too, to his tai-chi practice.)

Samples while asleep

We discussed 6 samples while Gualtiero was asleep (7 including the first day) and found that usually he did *not* hear the onset of the DES beep—that is, he awoke to find the device already beeping. In those cases, Gualtiero found that he could not detect any ongoing experience occurring prior to awakening.

In those cases where he *did* hear the onset of the beep (perhaps because he was not asleep or at least not deeply asleep) he did have some ongoing experience, but the content was not always known to him.

Here is a summary:

State	Hear beep onset?	Immediate impression of ongoing experience?	Immediate recognition of content?	Secure recognition of content?
Awake	Yes	Yes (but not always propositional, and not always well-formed)	Always	Sometimes
Asleep	Yes	Yes	Usually	Sometimes
	No	No	No	N/A

Those samples were obtained with the usual DES beeper, which means they were obtained within the first hour (and usually much less) of sleep. Russ supplied Gualtierio with recorded beeps that will allow him to sample later in sleep, but the results are not described here.

Russ has substantial skepticism about the sleep results because the time that it takes to awaken likely substantially disturbs the experience-apprehension process.

On the problematic sentence highlighted above

RTH0 (the original sentence):

None of those thinkings (whether ongoing or echo) involved a clear content, and in most of them, the content was not at all or only very sketchily apprehendable—that is, Gualtierio frequently apprehended himself as thinking (this is direct apprehension, not inference), but the content of that thinking was usually not available to him.

GP1: RE “None of those thinkings (whether ongoing or echo) involved a clear content”

This seems too strong to me, or at least I wouldn't put it that way. I'd say the thinkings did involve a clear content but in most (almost all?) cases I could not recall the precise content by the time I took notes. So I would append “[at the time of taking notes on his experience]” to read:

None of those thinkings (whether ongoing or echo) involved a clear content, and in most of them, the content was not at all or only very sketchily apprehendable—that is, Gualtierio frequently apprehended himself as thinking (this is direct apprehension, not inference), but the content of that thinking was usually not available to him [at the time of taking notes on his experience].

RTH2: I don't think it is fair to say “at the time of taking notes”—that makes it seem like it is the note-taking-delay that caused the thinking unavailability, which I don't think is right. Gualtierio is a very smart guy who has had eight days of practice where he has explicitly learned, under the guidance of a skilled interlocutor, that his task has been and will be to describe thinking if it occurs—its form and content has been a central topic of much discussion. “Oh! I forgot *by the time I took notes!*” is far too distal an explanation. Except at sample 7.4, I don't recall your saying things like “I knew what the thinking content was

when the beep occurred, but by the time I found my pencil I had lost it.” My recollection is of your saying things more like “When the beep occurred, I knew I was thinking something, but I’m not sure what.” (That’s why I asked you to identify an example or two that I could re-watch.) That is, I think your thought-content unavailability began in the immediate vicinity of the beep, not during the minute later until note-jotting time.

These are the possibilities that occur to me: (a) the thinking process takes place without a directly apprehended aspect; or (b) the DES respond-to-the-beep process disturbs the apprehension of the thinking. Maybe there are other possibilities, but they have to take place at the immediate time of (including immediately before) the beep, not at the time of taking notes.

This is a fairly big deal to me because psychologists (and some philosophers) are usually far too interested in written records, which are almost always one-shot reports by unskilled and wildly presuppositional individuals (rather like eyewitness testimony). By diametric contrast, your DES descriptions are the result of practiced, prepared, refined, disambiguated collaboration (the result of the iterative method, which I think is very rare in psychology or philosophy). We worked hard, over repeated occasions, in varied contexts, at capturing what was ongoing in your thought content, and still were unable most times to pin it down. That was *not*, I think, the result of your inadequate note-taking-time memory.

So I would replace “[at the time of taking notes on his experience]” with “in the DES process” to read:

None of those thinkings (whether ongoing or echo) involved a clear content, and in most of them, the content was not at all or only very sketchily apprehendable—that is, Gualtierio frequently apprehended himself as thinking (this is direct apprehension, not inference), but the content of that thinking was usually sometimes not available to him **in the DES process**.

GP3: I suggest revising this sentence (inserts in purple):

~~None of those thinkings (whether ongoing or echo) involved a clear content, and in most of them, the content was not at all or only very sketchily apprehendable—that is, Gualtierio frequently apprehended himself as thinking (this is direct apprehension, not inference), but the content of that thinking was usually sometimes not available to him~~ **in the DES process**.

When the content of his thinking or thought echoes was not available to Gualtierio, sometimes this happened because he could not clearly apprehend the thought content at the time of the beep; more often he remembered apprehending his thought content at the time of the beep but he could no longer recall the content at the time of taking notes.

As revised, the passage reads:

Gualtierio frequently apprehended himself as thinking (this is direct apprehension, not inference), but the content of that thinking was sometimes not available to him in the DES process. When the content of his thinking or thought echoes was not available to Gualtierio, sometimes this happened because he could not clearly apprehend the thought content at

the time of the beep; more often he remembered apprehending his thought content at the time of the beep but he could no longer recall the content at the time of taking notes.

In that revision I tried to summarize the situation in a way that seems accurate to me. E.g., sample 2.1 says "I'm also thinking about something without words or images (but I lost the content by the time I wrote down notes)"; sample 3.2 reports a clear content— "the thought that I should do the deal"; sample 4.3 says that I couldn't RECALL the exact content of the thought, not that I couldn't apprehend it at the time of the beep; sample 5.4 is pretty precise about the content of the thought; sample 7.1 is explicit about the content of the thought; sample 7.5 is explicit that I couldn't recall the content by the time I was taking notes.

RTH4: RE "In that revision I tried to summarize...[and the rest of that paragraph]

I wish to describe as clearly (bluntly?) as I can why I am not moved by that paragraph. It is of, I think, pretty fundamental importance, and I have written a little about it in the past (I think), but our conversation provides a case-study occasion for me to try to be more explicit than I have been.

What I say will be personal, in the sense that I will be talking about what *Gualtiero* wrote or said, but the importance is general, in the sense that I think what Gualtiero has written or said is similar to what other philosophers and psychologists have written or said, which I think is headed in the wrong direction. I apologize in advance for any of the personal that I have gotten wrong, etc.

To my ear, that paragraph is a bunch of words advanced in support of an opinion, which (in my view) is what philosophers and psychologists do, which (in my view) is headed largely in the wrong direction. My aim here is describe why I think that direction is wrong.

The words are quotations from the sample descriptions. But I could choose other words from the sample descriptions which would support the opposing point of view. For example, starting with sample 7.5 (on the logic that the most recent sample is perhaps the best, but that doesn't really matter), you write that "sample 7.5 is explicit that I couldn't recall the *content* by the time I was taking notes" (RTH italics); but I could interpret what you have quoted in the opposite direction. Everything in every sample description should be understood as including an implied "at the moment of the beep," because I am careful to put everything else in parentheses or brackets," so the entire description is:

At the moment of the beep I had an echo-y sense that there had been several thoughts, or maybe a chain of thoughts, that had been ongoing a second or so before the beep. [By the time I took notes, I couldn't remember the content.]

The heart of that description (I might say) is that *at the moment of the beep* I couldn't grasp even the basic form the at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience (several thoughts? a chain of thoughts?) and, in addition, the content was lost between then and the note-jotting. That is, I think a fair reading of the 7.5 description is that *immediately at the beep*, you couldn't grasp the thinking process that you understood to be ongoing.

I'm pretty sure I could make a similar argument for the other pieces of evidence your paragraph has advanced. All that would be to argue like a philosopher—I would be

interpreting the words one way, you would be interpreting the words another way. That is the kind of words-vs-words argument that I wish to criticize here—I think *both sides* of that argument are on the wrong path. That is, I wouldn't credit my own words any more than I would credit yours.

One reason the words-vs-words argument doesn't impress me is that I know that the words being contrasted are imperfect: they were sample descriptions written by me, reflecting some amalgam of my accurate view of the world and my presuppositions / blind spots, as I tried to characterize what Gualtiero said (which itself reflected, I presume, some amalgam of Gualtiero's accurate take on his experience and his presuppositions / blind spots). Gualtiero can choose to highlight some perspective on that double-amalgam; I might choose to highlight another perspective; and we will be off to the races about word usage etc. I think that race can go on forever, in a manner that I conceive of as our orbiting around each other, you quibbling about my word choice, my quibbling about yours, your quibbling about my quibble, and so on, never getting to ground.

Okay, so debating Russ's description of sample 7.5 is problematic. Russ's description is really meant as a pointer at the transcript of sample 7.5; we should really be considering that transcript rather than the description (much as a good philosopher would prefer to consider the original sources rather than a secondary gloss). Here's the opening salvo from the transcript:

54:58 GP: Uh, so I had a visual awareness of three receipts in front of me on the table, and some residue of fragments of propositional thoughts that were, I forgot though. So, and, and what, so, but I, when I say fragments, I mean plural. So there were, there were some, there was maybe a, a chain of thoughts or, or maybe they, I dunno if they were even like directly leading one to the other, but there was this sense of, there's been a sort of series of like, or multiple thoughts that had occurred to me right be, a little before, like say a second bef, y'know, a second to several seconds before. And, um, I probably could still tell at least the topics when the beep happened, but by the time I were down, I couldn't remember what they were.

I'm confident that you could mine that transcript to buttress your view that you forgot the important things between the beep and the note-jotting (doubtless emphasizing the "by the time I were down, I couldn't remember what they were" portion). And I could buttress my view that you didn't have access even at the time of the beep (doubtless emphasizing the [underlined] subjunctifiers in your expression "So there were, there were some, there was maybe a, a chain of thoughts or, or maybe they, I dunno if they were even like directly leading one to the other, but there was this sense of, there's been a sort of series of like, or multiple thoughts that had occurred to me right be, a little before, like say a second bef, y'know, a second to several seconds before," making the argument that the subjunctifiers indicate a deep failure to grasp experience). And I could object to your taking part of the talk out of context, and you could object to my identification of one subjunctifier or another, or whether the subjunctifiers count as evidence... Off to the words-vs-words races. I conclude that using the transcript isn't any better than using the description.

Okay, the transcript of sample 7.5 is really meant as a pointer at the interview of sample 7.5 itself; we should really consider the video of the interview rather than the transcript. And we could have a words-vs-words debate about this or that tone of voice or gesture or hesitation, etc. Off to the races.

All that is what I think we should *not* do, because I think such words-vs-words argument can never lead to a satisfactory resolution.

The problem with the words-vs-words method is that it puts each protagonist in a defensive mode, buttressing/defending a position that is built on some amalgam of accurate observation and presupposition. Worse, the buttressing/defending is (I think) usually aimed centrally at the *presupposition* aspect, because this particular occasion is an amalgam of accurate observation of that situation and presupposition; the next occasion is an amalgam of accurate observation of a *new* situation and presupposition; the next occasion is an amalgam of accurate observation of *yet a new* situation and presupposition. Across occasions, the accurate observations fade away because they are contingent. What remains constant from one occasion to the next is the presupposition. So advancing an argument, in my view, is usually (or at least often) defending a presupposition. That is a very bad deal, from my point of view, because it is a corollary to my view that confirmation bias is among the most fundamental of impediments.

The good news is that we have an alternative available to us. That alternative is not typically available to philosophers or even psychologists, or if the alternative is available, it is an alternative not taken. That alternative is the iterative method; here is how I would suggest that it be implemented.

I suggest that we do *not* try to convince each other of the correctness of our view—that would be words-vs-words, words orbiting around each other. Instead, I suggest that we try to cultivate in ourselves (and to help each other so cultivate; such cultivation is personal and cannot be imposed on another) the appreciation that it would be of greater value to be shown to be wrong about something that we strongly believe than to have our belief confirmed; that we cultivate in ourselves the acceptance that the cultivation will be difficult—seemingly impossible—because it is in opposition to presuppositions, and presuppositions do not give up without a fight to the death.

That is, I suggest that we sample again, probably a few times, (probably after we finish with Evan, probably sometime after mid-August) and in so doing be open to the possibility that we might (*or might not*) learn something that would enlighten the present discussion. I recommend that you cultivate the preference for discovering that the lack of ability to describe your thought process is not fundamentally linked to the delay between the beep and the note taking. I am *not* recommending that you accept that point of view without evidence. I am recommending that you accept the possibility that you have a presuppositional investment and perhaps an opportunity to rectify it. And I recommend to myself that I be open to the possibility that the longish delay is crucial.

The “*or might not*” is an important part of that paragraph. We should be happily open to the possibility that when we confront new samples, the present discussion might be irrelevant, or seem anachronistic.

That’s my suggestion. It is very much *let’s start over, being available to new issues or old issues alike*. I’m open to the possibility that I have a parochial view of philosophical or

psychological procedures, that the openness to new phenomena that I have described is already baked into standard practice in a way that I have not noticed.

GP5: Thanks for your thoughtful note. You make good points, and I agree that the best way forward is to sample a few more times with an open mind as to what we find.

Perhaps I should add that my sense is that there is a big and significant difference between my ability to apprehend, remember, and record propositional contents while asleep versus while awake. While asleep, I agree with you that my apprehension of propositional contents is very limited and my ability to remember and record them is close to nonexistent. While awake, I'd say that my apprehension of propositional contents is not too bad but my ability to remember and record them is limited. I wonder whether your impression of the limits of my apprehension of propositional contents is affected by lumping together samples obtained while awake and asleep. Either way, sampling again with an open mind should help both of us get a better understanding of the situation.

I think your suggestion is to wait until we are done with Evan and then schedule some more DES sessions, and I agree with that plan.