

**Mel May—Kerry U.
Joint Debrief Interview**

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the April 21 joint debrief interview with Mel and Kerry; the video is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/RycykLUtvJs>. In brown are conversations about the Descriptive Experience Sampling process that took place during the interview. In green are Russ's comments, and in blue are Julian's comments about and explanations of the Descriptive Experience Sampling process inserted after the interview. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt
JBK = Julian Bass-Krueger
Mel = Mel May
Kerry = Kerry U.

[As we set up the interview recordings, we drop in on a conversation that is underway regarding Mel's interview about her inner experience that had recently appeared at <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250405-i-don-t-have-a-voice-in-my-head-life-with-no-inner-monologue>. That interview was the result of a reporter's having asked Russ to point him toward a person who does *not* experience frequent inner speaking.]

0:00 RTH: Said yes.

0:02 Mel: Yeah. As the resident, no-voice person. [laughs] [Kerry laughs] Russ was like, "yeah, I know a guy..." [laughs]

0:08 Kerry: [laughs].

0:10 RTH: I told him that he, that Mel was sort of an unusual person in that regard because Mel didn't have much. And uh, there's quite a few people don't have inner speaking who have quite a bit of, quite a bit of other stuff going on, which I think is actually true for Kerry much of the time, actually. But

0:24 Kerry: There's been going on in

0:25 RTH: A lot of stuff going on without being, without it's being inner speaking.

0:27 Mel: Yeah, yeah. True, true,

0:29 RTH: True. And, and she is probably somewhat more typical than Mel in that regard.

0:37 Mel: And then, y'know, we had a little, had a Zoom and he was fascinated. He was like, Damn! I could talk to you for ages. Cuz like, you, Kerry, he's like, *I am not like this*, so this is [Kerry: Yeah.] crazy. I was like, yeah, this is my life.

0:50 Kerry: Did he, did you give him access to the, your section of the website? [She refers to part X of this website.] Like could you...

0:55 Mel: Could you No, we, we hadn't published that yet, because we only published that quite recently, yeah. Russ?

1:00 RTH: Well, he had access to the first half of it.

1:03 Mel: Oh yeah. True. The first half of the stuff,

1:05 RTH: The, the first half of the website, the.... Have you looked at the website, Kerry? [Kerry: Yeah, I have.] Have you looked at Mel's, Mel's website? [Kerry: Yeah.] The first half, which is the sampling itself, has been up for quite a while. [Mel: Mm.] And, uh, it's only the second half the, the post-sampling discussions that are on the new side. So he could have, he could have had as much access as he wanted. And I, and I think I had, I had told him (I'm not a hundred percent sure about that), but I think I had told him that, uh, that Mel's website existed.

1:39 Mel: But I did,... I think I said this in the email as well, but maybe you weren't on, Kerry, but like, um, Russ, I posted that article on my Instagram and had *so many* people message about it. Um, I think like, there, there were like hundreds of people that clicked on the link to the article based on what I posted. And it was just a picture and a quick little caption, and you can track the analytics. So that was just from my personal Instagram following. And then like, [laughs] I have so many people trying to add me on LinkedIn and find my, and they're like, Hey, I've read about you. And I'm like, wow, this just must, must be what it feels like to be Russ! Cuz I'm like, I actually can't keep up with all this. [all laugh].

2:22 RTH: Well, y'know, you, you probably have, have gotten mu many more followers than I have as a result of this because I don't do Instagram. And, uh,

2:31 Mel: Yes. But, but so my point is, though, that like, even just that article, which we, because we've done a lot of discussions about this and a lot of work in this area, um, I would say we have a, probably, you know, that that article really scratched the surface of all of this. Um, and there was *so much* interest from people that are removed from it. Like us, the general public, the normal friends and family and colleagues and people that I have on Instagram we're all *wildly* interested, which is the really, um, cool part of it, I think.

3:04 RTH: And when you say they're interested, what, what, what, how would you characterize their interest? What [inaudible]?

3:09 Mel: What would they interested clicking, clicking on the link, because that's, that's taking you from seeing passively seeing something on Instagram, you are actively clicking on the link to take you to a separate website. So you are very consciously deciding. You wanna read more about that. So that's a big tick. And then I had a lot of people

message me about it as well, like lots of people asking me questions or follow up questions to the article or whatever in my, um, direct messages. So,

- 3:36 RTH: And, and my, my question really was more about how, how do you characterize the questions? What, what are people, what... *about what* is this interest *in*? Is this I'm interested in *Mel*? Or I'm interested in *Mel's being different from me*? Or,
- 3:50 Mel: Um, I think most people were comparing what they were reading about my experience with what they think their own experience was. So the, um, stark contrast in my mind being so quiet and that being quite fascinating and feeling very different to what they think they are, which is exactly what happened with Kerry and I.
- 4:13 RTH: Right. And I think that's, I think that's actually a sort of a true statement. Most, most people's characteristics of their own inner experience isn't very good. But that one, that, that *Mel is different from me*, that one's probably right, actually.
- 4:25 Mel: [laughs]. And so I think, y'know, further to this, um, y'know, like now we've sort of wrapped all this up in a nice little bow. And there's a guy I'm meeting with tomorrow to sort of talk, who's a very, very, very big producer in New York that I wanna start speaking to him about. I've got this idea for this documentary. So starting to sort of softly pitch the storytelling with this, now that we've sort of got this understanding, I think that that has, that, um, contrast has become apparent as I think the nicest hook from a storytelling perspective. Hey, here's sort of like *my* experience. And for a lot of people they can, uh, establish that, that feels quite different to what they think they know about themselves. And so immediately we're in, because mine seems so different to so many people. I think that that's a really, that is what's hooking in a lot of people. As opposed to if that article was say about Kerry's experience and you can have all these things going on. I don't think so many people would've grabbed at it as much because mine is so different.
- 5:32 Kerry: Yeah. Even, even when my.... So I have another friend who's also Australian, who's also named Mel, who also lives in New York City (a little bit confusing!). But she, her inner experience is quite similar to mine. And us three got a coffee like I guess last year now. Um, and
- 5:53 RTH: The three, the three being the two Mels and Kerry?
- 5:55 Kerry: Two Mels and me [laughs]. Okay. But, um, when *this* Mel was telling myself and *other* Mel about her inner experience, my friend Mel almost fell out of her chair, cuz she was like, what? How is this, how is this possible? It's the same thing. It's just, it's, people are so in their own head, for lack of a better phrase, about their own experience, assuming that other people are all operating in the same way. And to hear someone have such a different experience to what's going on, on in your own brain, I think is definitely, I totally agree. I think that's how this should be, uh, talked about.
- 6:40 Mel: I think there's a shock value in it, y'know? So like, I think that's a great way to get people thinking about this whole thing. Everyone's very different. And I think the four of us have an appreciation of that. And I think a nice way to get people to start

thinking about this whole topic is with something that's so jarring as my experience, I think. I think a lot of people find that my experience jarring

- 7:04 RTH: So I can, I pretty distinctly remember the first time I encountered somebody who did not have much in inner experience. And he, he was a, a pastor, a very successful pastor in town. And so I had reason to believe him. And I mean, he seemed like a sort of an honest guy and, and upstanding member of the community, and whatever. But it took, it took me having been at this for a couple of years at that time, to wrap my head around, *is it really possible to navigate your way through the world without much inner experience?* And I came to the conclusion that *yes*, there, there isn't any reason that you have to have inner experience. And uh, and that leaves us with Mel.
- 7:49 Mel: So I still have, okay, so to the point of this sort of, the, the point of today, I guess is just to lob out more of these conclusive questions and things like that. And Kerry, feel free to lob up any, you have, I'm just spitballing here. But like on that point, Russ, again, y'know, I'm always asking you to draw conclusions. But like say with he and I or other people that have reported a, a quieter mind, for lack of a better term at the moment, like, are there commonalities that you see? It's the commonalities in certain inner experiences that I'm curious about. Are, have you noticed any? Between people? Do y'know what I'm trying to say?
- 8:31 RTH: So to, to give a really good answer to that question, I would've had to sample with a *lot* more people. So I have to say the, the, the best answer to that question is, I don't know. Cuz that, that question is, from my point of view, a personality question. So what I, what I would have to do would be to, to identify this aspect of Mel's experience across a lot of people sort of randomly selected or, or, or selected in some, in some thoughtful way (which we're a *long way away* from having done). [Mel: Mmm.] So, so if you were asking for my sort of personal characteris..., personal characterizations, I probably could do that. But you shouldn't take them as anything more than that. And, uh, and so what I would say is that the people that I have met like that are seemingly successful, well-integrated people.
- 9:30 Mel: Seemingly! [Mel and Kerry laugh]
- 9:31 RTH: But, but I'm happy to, I'm happy to consider Mel as the exception to that rule. [laughs]
- 9:36 Mel: Thank you! [They laugh]
- 9:38 RTH: I don't, I don't, I don't know Mel well enough to, to be, to really say anything about that [laughs]. What I, what I would, the general, the general issue from my point of view is that Mel's question is a totally important question. And psychology ought to, ought to be saying in bold headlines, **I don't know**. [Mel: Hmm.] Because *instead* what they say is, well, this is what I think (like more or less like what I just did) and, and that dulls the mind. It, it provides sort of an excuse or a say, well, yeah, we, we really know. We can give her a Likert scale or whatever and measure that stuff and know her personality characteristics and compare it to the Big Five or do whatever we would do in the personality business. But I don't think we would really know much.

- 9:38 Russ comments: RE “dulls the mind”
This is a reference to B. F. Skinner’s criticism of mentalisms. Skinner held that to the degree that one accepts mentalistic explanations or understandings, one is *unlikely* to pursue *actual* explanations or understandings. He was right about that, I think, which is why DES radically avoids giving mentalistic explanations.
- 10:27 Kerry: How many....?
- [JBK has been in the role of Producer on this riverside.com call, which has allowed him to be heard but not recorded. He has left the Producer role so that he can now rejoin the conversation as a participant; that causes a delay in the recording.]
- 10:41 RTH: So rejoin away.
- 10:46 Mel: Okay,
- 10:48 RTH: So everybody is recording now?
- 10:50 Kerry: Okay. I just wanted to, wanted to know how many, um, how many individuals with unsymbolized thinking have you been able to interview? Cuz I assume because it’s so rare that they’re hard to come across. And also I assume because people mischaracterize their own inner experience, someone might say, oh yes, I have such a quiet mind. I think I have unsymbolized thinking and then start the DES sampling. And that actually might not fully be the case. So do you have an idea of how many people you’ve interviewed?
- 11:20 RTH: So the, so that, that question has a false premise to it, I think, which is that *unsymbolized thinking* and *quiet mind* are more or less the same thing, which in my head, they’re distinctly *not*. They are very different from each other. What I call unsymbolized thinking (which is my term, I think, so I get to define it however I wanna define it) [JBK: Umm.] but the, the, it, it is the direct apprehension of a thought that is every bit as specific as if that thought had been in a visual image like you have or in symbolized or in inner speaking, like a lot of people have. It’s, it’s every bit as present as that, and every bit as differen, differentiated as that. But it doesn’t have words and it doesn’t have pictures in it. That’s what I call *unsymbolized thinking*. So I could be thinking, y’know, well, *let’s wait until Julian responds because he’s been a producer*.
- 12:07 I could be thinking that every bit as specifically as if I had said that to myself, quote, “let’s wait until Julian responds and rejoins until, because he is been a producer” or whatever. But there would be no term *Julian* or *producer* or *rejoin* and no picture of Julian or whatever, whatever. So that is *not* a, what I think we’ve been talking about with Mel as being a *quiet mind*. That is, that is a creation of my own that I am attending to [Kerry: Mm-hmm.] (for lack of a better term). *Of those*, there are lots. There are a lot of people who have in unsymbolized thinking, I think our best estimate is something like a quarter of people, a quarter of all of our samples, let’s put it this way. A quarter of all of our samples could be called unsymbolized thinking. You should take that “quarter” with a grain of salt because we don’t have random samples and our populations are biased towards the euro-centric sample, whatever. There’s a

lot of, there's a lot of problems with my data. But, but unsymbolized thinking is fairly common in that regard.

13:18 The quiet mind kind of thing that we are describing with Mel is pretty *uncommon*. When we get to the end and we say, well, there's nothing in experience. Well, there are some people who have that kind of thing *occasionally* like, but not to the degree that Mel as it in her sampling.

13:38 JBK: I'm curious about that because like when we did the sampling, we avoided comparing and saying, oh, *Mel's so different* or whatever. But now looking back, like, could you compare Mel's quiet mind to other people you sampled with? Like is it on the very upper echelon of people who aren't adding anything? Or like people who often have, aren't experiencing anything?

14:04 RTH: I would say that Mel had many more instances of where she does not seem to be adding anything, or even fo or or even focused on anything. Cuz a lot of people don't add anything. Like un like, um, sensory awareness. I'm interested in the red of the wall that's behind Julian, for example. Not because the red of the wall has any interest or any particular meaning to me, but for whatever reason I'm drawn to the, to that particular redness. That's sensory awareness. I'm not *adding anything* to that. I am, it's, it's the red-that's-there that I am seeing. So that's, so I'm not adding anything to it. But what I am is, I'm (and, and this is a word that I think I, I became more comfortable in using with Mel) I'm *particularizing*. [Mel: Mmm.] I'm *particularizing* the, my interest in, in the redness. Of all the things that are going on, on the screen (which is a quite complicated visual thing), I happen to particularize the red. That is, that is *Russ* doing that. That's not the characteristic of the *screen* that makes it red. It's for whatever reason that at a particular moment I'm particularizing. And there's a lot of that: sensory awareness is, is a common thing.

15:27 What Mel did was to *not* particularize something. She would be seeing the screen and yeah, there would be red there and there would be purple on Kerry's shirt and whatever, and, but Mel would not be zoomed in or, or, or attending to, or particularizing or whatever, any aspect of that. And that's pretty uncommon in my sampling experience.

15:54 JBK: And, and I'm curious, Mel, how you describe that to people. Like when you said you're talking to the other Australian Mel, like, I dunno if you use words like "not particularizing" or like, if you describe it more as a "quiet mind" or more as just "not talking to yourself," or "not having it in your monologue." [Mel: Mm.] How do you kind of...?

16:14 Mel: Um, yeah, it's, that's the challenging thing, right? To try and explain it in the most layman's terms possible. [JBK: Yeah.] So I think something like a *not particularizing* works really well for Russ. And I still feel like that's a bit too much for a normal person that has no concept of this whole topic, for the most part. So with people, I often, the "quiet mind" is a really lovely, um, phrase to use for someone really that's never even considered this as a starting point. Um, then some of the other things that I, some of the other ways I try and explain it. Like, I was at a, a barbecue yesterday and this came up again. A guy was like, "I loved that article on your Instagram." And he wanted to

talk about it. And, uh, he had some questions. And another thing that I often fall on is like, um, “yeah, everything’s quite instinctive to me.”

17:05 I think people like, like that sort of notion, of there’s not this great like preamble in my head in, in whatever form that takes, or whatever. Like I, I-see-ball-get-ball vibe. I think people can sort of grab at that in a way that’s a little bit helpful. Um, they’re sort of the two things I... And then I think sometimes I say not editorializing, I think people get that a little bit, but again, I’m starting to lose them by there. It gets a little bit too, um, not academic, but y’know, like the language is quite formal there. “It’s quiet mind” is really lovely first entry point.

17:39 RTH: So the second of those, which I forget what you called it, what did, what, what was your second term there?

17:47 JBK: Instinctive,

17:47 RTH: Instinctive. Instinctive. Instinctive. My guess is that if you say “I’m very instinctive,” that every, *almost everybody* will *not* understand what you’re talking about. [Mel: Really!?!] Yes. Because a lot of people, yes, a lot of people will think of themselves as being instinctive, and it has nothing to do with they’re having a quiet mind. So people can have total visual imagery and say, “well, I’m very instinctive!” Kerry might say that!

18:09 Kerry: Yeah! I, I would say that about myself. [they laugh] It’s funny. Yeah, because my, in my interpretation of being instinctive is almost like overthinking. Like my, my instincts are like working through all these things and then I, and then I move forward with, with the thing that I feel is most in my gut. So like where’s

18:27 Mel: My, it’s a complete opposite to what I’m saying! [they laugh]. [Kerry: Yeah.]

18:31 RTH: Pretty much! It’s good feedback. [laughs], which is, which is a totally important part of my work, which I have, which I have tried to say pretty, pretty repeatedly, is that people (And, and, and I stole it from Skinner, and he probably stole it from somebody else. So it’s not like, I’m trying to say it’s original thing.) But the, the language about inner experience is totally badly, uh, under understood. People have totally different understandings of terminology.

18:58 Kerry: That being said, if you said instinctive *after* saying you have no, um, inner monologue and no inner seeing, then I think I would understand it. But if you just said, I’m an instinctive per person, I’m like, yeah, all women are instinctive. We’re always right.

19:16 Mel: Yeah. Yeah. No, yeah, I, I do agree with that. I think they, the.... You’re right. And that is definitely how it usually happens. It’s sort of like, because it answers the question, if I say “quiet mind, no, inner a seeing no inner speaking.” And then people go, “well, how do you think stuff? How do you make any decision ever?” And I say, “It’s all just very instinctive. I see ball / get ball.” I, y’know, get porridge, make porridge. Like it’s that it’s really that straightforward and everyone’s like [gestures mind exploding]

- 19:45 RTH: [laughs]. But I don't, I don't think that's actually true. I think, I think you do quite a bit of processing. It's just not, it's not directly apprehendable.
- 19:52 Mel: Yeah, it's definitely not directly apprehended. That's true.
- 19:54 RTH: The, the, the way that I describe it [Mel: Mm-hmm.] is... The, the most effective way that I describe it is by subtracti, subtraction. Can you imagine what it would be like to not have visual imagery? *Yeah. People can, can do that.* Well think of them. And now can you imagine what it's like to have no inner speaking? *Yeah, I can think about that.* And then no sensory awareness and whatever. And what's *left* is Mel, basically.
- 20:19 Mel: Yep. And Kerry, I think that's where we got to, um, with the, the second half of the stuff we did on my sampling once you'd dropped out, when we were trying to categorize my samples and things like that. Um, we struggled after doing yours and then returning to mine. And what we sort of identified was exactly what Russ is saying. It was, um, in the subtraction that was where the really interesting stuff was in trying to describe my experience. It was, well, I'm *not* particularizing, I'm *not* editorializing, I'm *not* inner speaking. Like that was much easier, um, to work with rather than trying to find language to describe what was left, I think. Would you all agree with that? [Kerry: Yeah, I can see that.] Mm-hmm, Yeah.
- 21:09 JBK: And then another big discussion is I kind of wanted to rate things into more or less absorbed. Like sometimes it seemed Mel was very absorbed in a conversation or watching *Saltburn* or whatever. And some moments seemed really autopilot, like just getting a frying pan and putting stuff in it, and like just very automatic. Um, but in the end, it didn't make sense to you, Mel, to really make distinctions because it was all kind of just, yeah, you were there, you were locked in, or whatever, and you weren't singling anything out. But it made more sense to just describe that than to make any differences. Like, oh, this is more absorbed, this is a less like,
- 21:56 Mel: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was a big sticking point for us. Again, Kerry, to that it was like, oh, am I like super locked in for this? And is this just sort of autopilot-y? And I really, yeah, we went back and forth on this. I was like, I don't think that's actually like a really important part of my experience. Yeah. It's more just like, none of this is happening or whatever. And, and I think that we're splitting hairs there. It doesn't feel like the most important part. And then we've sort of taken a step back and being like, yeah, okay, if we're trying to explain this to other people, what are like the crucial, interesting, um, determining things about my experience. It's that subtraction aspect as opposed to like, oh, she's a bit more locked in when it's like this, or whatever. [Kerry: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] It wasn't that, that was the most interesting thing.
- 22:44 Kerry: I also think, um, a question that I would find interesting in some sort of like, documentary style, and I don't know if this is an explos, like a whole can of worms, but, um, just around, so Mel and I were talking about this separately, but I would consider myself quite a feelings-first person. So, um, but also in my, in my summary that you guys wrote up, feelings were only present in a couple of beeps! And so I was wondering, am I attaching feelings to certain beeps that actually that's not what it was. So the example I gave was the inner seeing of my dad on the hike ahead of me,

like the vision from my childhood where he was holding Starburst in front of me.

[Kerry's sample 2.1] Like, am I attaching joy and nostalgia to that when I wasn't experiencing that in that moment? Cuz it was really just like, I was just seeing it, and that's what I was experiencing?

23:52 And on the other, on the flip side of that, with Mel, for lack of a better phrase, experiencing nothing [laughs] like quite often, um, I'm in, I'm like very interested in the role of feelings with unsymbolized thinking. Because how do you process and feel your emotions if on the whole you're sort of [pause] [Mel: Flatlining.] Yeah! yeah, yeah. [laughs]. Yeah. I'm trying to be really delicate with my words!! [laughs] But, but like, am I, am I attributing emotion to things that are actually not feelings-based in my experience? And on the other side of that, how does Mel feel [laughs], how do, how do you feel things and, and process the emotional side of things? Um, yeah, [laughs], I let Russ to answer that! [inaudible] [laughs].

25:04 RTH: So I do have something to say about that, but I'd be happy to have anybody else say something before I, before I say it.

25:10 JBK: But I could take a crack at that. And then, um, can, you can fill in. But the, yeah, the way I see it, like you did have some samples where you had clear direct feelings, like when you're in Staples and, and the guy is mistreating his coworker and you're just feeling like, ugh, like that's gross. [Sample 8.6] Um, so yeah, you did have samples with feelings, like it wasn't the main thing, like you had more visual imagery, but like you did have some feelings.

25:44 So, so like, I think when it is there directly, you're definitely able to describe that. And it, there might be other times when, like you, some emotional process maybe ongoing, but like, you're not directly feeling that emotion at that time. So like, that's possible.

26:04 And then, yeah, I, I do wonder if like, sometimes there might be a little hint of feeling and like, like if you're looking at the lights in the trees, the leaves twinkle, like if that's somehow inherently pleasurable. Or like this thing with your dad, and like, that's inherently a little bit joyful and nostalgic and... But I think like, unless it's really directly experienced and you can report on it, it's just hard to say one way or the other. Like if it's directly there or not, like, like DES it tries to get the main things, but there might be all kinds of little nuances of experience, like the the 0.1%, the 1% that, like it says, we, we can't really know that. Um, but yeah, [laughs],

27:00 RTH: So I, I would agree with almost all that I think. But I would say it a little bit different, different way. So Kerry, you said, I think of my, (if I understood correctly), I, I think of myself as a feelings-first person, and yet this (and the *and yet* part is mostly mine, I think) there were, there were only a few samples (one of them, the, the Staples example is a good one) where you actually directly apprehended feelings. So what I would say about that is we have to distinguish *clearly* between an *emotional process* and the *experience* of an emotional process, the directly apprehended experience. And Kerry, who, who thinks of herself as a feelings-first, first person probably is an emotions-first person, but isn't a feelings-first, first person. Most of the time, most, most of the time the actual experience of emotion isn't present. There's probably a whole lot of stuff that could be called *emotional processing* going on. *Probably is*. But it doesn't make its way directly into Kerry's experience.

28:04 And Mel is pretty much like that, except that she didn't have the couple of times of... Well, maybe she did have a couple of times of where there was feelings directly experienced. Most, most of the time the emotional processing was happening outside of her direct apprehension.

28:21 Kerry: Is that, to a degree, a separation of conscious processing and subconscious processing?

28:28 RTH: Could be. I have a hard time with those terms, but yes. [Kerry: Okay.] [JBK laughs] What I, I think of it, I think of it as *parallel processing* rather than *unconscious and subconscious*, because the, that makes it seem like there's two realms. And I don't think there are *two* realms. I think there's *multiple* realms. And, uh, um, and much of the processing that we take place that, that takes place in us. Y'know, we, we've got however many, 42 billion I know, I don't remember what the number is, neurons and however many trillion connections between them, the synapses or whatever the, we don't have a direct apprehension of any of that stuff. All that stuff is coordinated processing that's taking place inside this bag of bones and neurons and glial cells and whatever else is doing that processing. But we don't, we don't have direct access to it. We, we have direct access, what, what we directly apprehend is somehow related to all that stuff, but it's not, it's not as unitary as we give it credit for.

28:28 Russ comments: For me, the interesting question is not *How does Mel get along without experiencing some particularizing?* but rather, *Why does Kerry (like most other people) particularize?* I don't think consciousness science or psychology has a good answer for either one of those questions. To answer those questions (which I think are fundamentally important and interesting), one has to be fully familiar with the kinds of experiences people have, as revealed by DES or some other process as good as or better than DES. But I don't think there are many such investigations.

29:30 Kerry: Makes sense.

29:33 Mel: And then, so my, um, Kerry tried to ask me this via text this morning, um, when she was reading my samples [laughs], and then clearly these, um, questions were starting to stir around her. And my response was, I've started to go a little bit insane about this lately, as you well know, Russ, because I always make that sort of joke about like, well, I am, I a bit dead inside?!? But I think the thing that I reflect on and have, have started to go a bit insane on is that I do find it quite hard actually to interpret my own emotions because it is the, as I was saying, it's the flat line. I'm in this constant state. And because there's not this inner monologue that perhaps some people have that is dissecting that, or talking through that, or whatever, I have noticed lately that I think I am always this, and therefore if someone presses me about, y'know, all sorts of emotions, I actually find it really hard to know what I do feel.

30:42 And I think that that's, *I think*, y'know, (Russ, you can shoot this down, but I don't care!) I think that that is related to the fact that my mind is so quiet. I, I think I do. I'm very good. I ironically, it's my job very good at interpreting, interpreting other people. It is what I do for work and I'm really good at it, and I'm very confident in that. I can hear someone say something and I can analyze you and spit your story back to you better than you can do to yourself. But unfortunately, I think I really struggled to

do that on myself. Um, and I've just started to notice that. And it's really weird and I try and be better at it, but I just don't think I like *am*! And I think that that's to do with the way I experience stuff.

31:26 RTH: So I'm gonna make the same comment as I made a while, a while back about what you said. And, and it is, I think there's a lot of people, probably including Kerry, who would say the exact same words that you just said "I have trouble knowing what's going on in my own emotions. My emotions are complicated or whatever." I'm, I'm not a mind reader, so I don't really know about Kerry, but there's lots of people who, who would say that, who have, who have clearly particularized inner experience. So that whether or not you have a particularizing inner experience thing does not make you the kind of person who would have difficulty recognizing your own emotions, I think. I think that's...

32:01 What, what I think about it is that emotions are a very complicated thing and we, and, and there are, y'know, I'm, I'm reacting to the way you *look* and the way you *sound* and the *environment that's around you* and all, all that stuff are, are all part of human interactions with people and our history together and whatever, all that stuff to say, well, there's gotta be one feeling about that, uh, just not that that's true. People make it seem like, well, y'know, this is how I feel. And maybe that's true, but maybe it's a dramatic oversimplification.

32:40 Kerry: I fully agree with that, actually. Um, even though I have a lot of thoughts, um, [laughs] all the time, whether it be, um, inner monologue or, or inner seeing whatever, or like, yeah, I, I'm experiencing a lot in my mind often, um, I also often have a very hard time, uh, trusting my emotions or, or knowing exactly how I feel about something. So it's not that, I mean, (at least in my experience), it's not that, um, y'know, an inner monologue would necessarily give you more clarity about how you feel about things. Um, if that makes you feel about any better! [laughs]

33:35 Mel: It does a little bit, thanks. [they laugh]

33:39 Kerry: And it's a whole thing in therapy to name your emotions. And people have such a hard time to, to do that and, and even identify, like sometimes I'll say, oh, I'm so anxious or nervous about something, I'm actually, I'm, I'm actually really angry about something. And misnaming that, I think, maybe comes from the fact that I have so many darting thoughts around something, y'know,

34:06 RTH: So something, the, the therapy reference is interesting to me because I, I wouldn't, clearly in therapy there are a lot of people who, who dramatically misunderstand their own emotions. Y'know, people are yelling at people and putting their fist through walls and say, no, I don't feel angry. But I think that's probably *true* for them. They don't feel angry, or at least for some of them. And whether naming the emotions is a good idea or a bad idea, I don't know that, I don't know whether that's true or not. Be, because it makes it seem like emo there's one, just one mo one emotion going on, and it's, and I'm guessing that's probably not really true. So whether it's a good idea for some people to oversimplify the world and make it seem like there's one emotion and you gotta re you gotta recognize this anger when it, when it occurs, well, maybe

so. But in the long haul, that might be worse or worse than not, because it, it, it oversimplifies the way the people really are.

35:08 Kerry: It might be experience, it's like you're naming multiple emotions around something, so definitely don't have to land on one, because as a feelings-first person, you're feeling a lot! [JBK: Mm-hmm.] [laughs].

35:21 Mel: But then, and then, so I think with another way of, um, looking at like me analyzing and getting frustrated about like, *am I dead inside* and *why can't I observe myself*? I think that that's annoys me of, with my quiet mind, with the clear mind, with the not editorializing. I, I, y'know, go through the world and observe the world and, and intake things and sort of process things. And that's a really. And so then lately in trying to understand myself better and not be able to just like, take in the feelings-based and interpret the feelings space, like I just walk about my life and I'm able to do so seamlessly. I think that's what's causing me... I'm like, what? This is so weird. I don't usually, I can just see—do, see—do, like whatever. And then if I flip the mirror on myself internally, which this is just a normal thing that normal people have, but I've just started to clock it lately because it's a, um, fresh phenomena compared to me living in the world, I think.

35:21 Russ comments: We have spent a large amount of personal resources aimed at Mel and at Kerry, and have concluded that Mel's inner experience is, in a manner of speaking, very different from Kerry's: Mel, in a manner of speaking, doesn't particularize or has a quiet mind, whereas Kerry, in a manner of speaking, has lots of skillful visual imagery. Those are, in a manner of speaking, very important differences, and I happily stand behind them.

But my be-careful-about-the-in-a-manner-of-speaking antennae are jangling with some of Mel's comments.

Mel's new manner of speaking about her non-particularization / quiet mind has some power, some importance, some legitimacy, all arising from this manner of speaking about her experience. There is doubtless some value to Mel in recognizing that her inner experience is a non-particularizing / quiet mind. There is doubtless some value to Kerry in recognizing that her inner experience is not constant inner speaking (as she originally thought) but is skillful visualizing.

These newly realized manners-of-speaking seem like the real thing, seem fundamentally important, but (say my be-careful-about-the-in-a-manner-of-speaking antennae) they are not. They are descriptive in a manner of speaking, perhaps even of high fidelity in a manner of speaking, but that is only in a manner of speaking. Here, for example (to my be-careful-about-the-in-a-manner-of-speaking antennae) Mel is trying to use her non-particularizing / quiet-mind understanding to explain the difficulty she has with grasping her emotions (say, about X), but that is problematic (in my view) on three fronts: to the extent that she is trying to use her non-particularizing / quiet-mind understanding of X, she is focusing on her non-particularizing / quiet-mind rather than on X—that is, her non-particularizing / quiet-mind mediated understanding *actually gets in the way* of the more important direct understanding of X.

Second, the non-particularizing view of Mel's experience is not True with a capital T; it is only true in a manner of speaking. There is a better way of encountering

Mel. What that way is is not known to me, but I'm pretty sure it will be better than the non-particularizing / quiet-mind understanding.

Third, to reify the manner of speaking is to take a reductionistic view of Mel (whether taken by Mel or by anyone else)—it reduces Mel to a machine—pull this non-particularizing lever, get that result.

None of that should be understood as denigrating the non-particularizing / quiet-mind view of Mel—it's a pretty high-fidelity way of characterizing Mel. But it is only Mel in a manner of speaking; it is not the real Mel. Sooner or later Mel will have to learn to bracket that manner of speaking so that she can move to one notch higher fidelity.

See the comment at 20:08 in Mel's interview 4 transcript with commentary.

- 36:25 RTH: Well, I, I have spent the better part of 50 years trying to, trying to figure out what the, what inner experience is good for, or used for or useful for, [Mel: Yeah.] [JBK: Mm-hmm.] advantages and disadvantages, or whatever. And I, and I mean that entirely seriously, the 50 years and thought about it hard and whatever. And I still don't know the answer to that. [Mel: Mmm.] I think it's possible that inner experience is mostly epiphenomenal and, but I don't think it's entirely epiphenomenal, but most of the world.....
- 36:53 Mel: What does that mean?
- 36:54 RTH: That means that it, that it happens in parallel to what's actually going on, but it doesn't really interact with it. So Kerry's got a visual image, but the visual image isn't really impacting her. She's being impacted by the, by her surroundings, and she makes an image while she's doing that as part of the way that she's reacting to her, to her surroundings. But the image itself doesn't really affect her. I think that's possible. [Mel: Mmm.]
- 37:18 RTH: And I think it's also possible that the image *does* affect her. There, because she sees it in this particular way, then, then she responds in this particular way. And I'm guessing that, that the truth is somewhere in, in between. And that the philosophical point of view that that that tries to make it *either* epiphenomenal *or not* is a mistake. I think there's, I think the world is just more complicated than that. And, and Mel and Kerry are, are, are good examples of that. I mean, Kerry does a lot of stuff in her inner experience that Mel doesn't do, and Mel does a lot of stuff in *her* inner experience that *Kerry* doesn't do. And yet they both navigate their way through the world in intelligent, thoughtful, emotional responsive, emotionally responsive ways. *But* that doesn't mean that Kerry's inner experience, the, the fact that Kerry's inner experience is different from Mels is not important. I think, I think it probably *is* important, just, I just don't think we understand it yet. Maybe never will
- 38:25 RTH: [pause] Which, which I wanna, I want to, I want to do one housekeeping deal before I forget to do it. And that is: Kerry, we have not yet (or all of us, actually), we have not yet agreed that we can make your website public. So, so far it's been up there for ba basically just for the others. And it might, it might be a good idea for us to do that sooner rather than later. So if Mel's having a conversation with somebody tomorrow about this stuff, it might be of interest or value to her to be able to say, "y'know, you can go look at these two websites if you want," and have those websites out there. But..

38:59 Kerry: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm more than more than happy to have anything public. Whatever you guys need to do, it's really happy.

39:05 RTH: Okay. And, and, and Julian hasn't yet responded to some of the stuff that, that that's out there. So he would have to say, well, y'know, we can, and, and we can, we don't have to consider this the final version of Kerry. If we can, we can continue, we *could* decide today to continue to massage this website to some, to some degree, but, but yet have it, have that massaging be available to people who are tracking it.

39:31 JBK: So yeah, I've, I've read everything. I don't disagree with any of your comments. I think it's all super helpful and insightful. Um, yeah, and I'm, I'm fine with publishing it before I get to a draft because like lately I haven't been catching that many mistakes. Like it's pretty clean and, um. Yeah, I'm fine. Like if you already publish and at some point I do end up responding or revising something,

40:02 RTH: We can alter it.

40:03 JBK: You can alter it. Okay. Right. So yeah, I'm fine with publishing it.

40:07 RTH: Everybody agree with that? Alright, then shortly after this, after this meeting, I will take one more look at that, at that site and see whether I think it's okay and pull the trigger on it. And, and I'll let everybody know that I've done it. And so then, Mel, you can say whatever it is that you want or don't want to say about that in whatever meeting that you have or don't have about it.

40:26 Kerry: Um, just while we're on housekeeping, Russ, I also need your address to mail the beeper back.

40:32 JBK: [laughs].

40:33 RTH: I'll email it to you. I will, I will email it to you.

40:38 JBK: But yeah, we, we did, um, the whole analysis process for you, Kerry, which you started, but then that went on for like [Kerry: Yeah!] was it seven days or something? It was,

40:46 Kerry: That is crazy!

40:48 JBK: [laughs]. But, um, I guess did, did you end up looking at the final, like, results? Yeah,

40:54 Kerry: I was, I was looking at the, the final description. Is that what you mean? Like the summary?

40:59 JBK: Yeah, the summary and I guess there's also the spreadsheet just where we [Kerry: Mm-hmm.] quote everything or like. Did that bring up any new questions?

- 41:09 Kerry: Um, honestly, I feel like most of my questions arose actually looking at Mel's stuff more than looking at my stuff. [laughs] [JBK laughs]. Um, just because I think, I mean, I think everything we, you, you wrote was really accurate. I think it is kind of funny that I, um, I mean probably unsurprising to everyone else on this call, but I did sign up to this as, I think Mel made a call out saying, *who has a really strong inner monologue?* And I was like, [holds up her right hand as if to volunteer or swear] my inner monologue is *so strong!* [laughs] And then it actually kind of wasn't! [they laugh] So part of me was like, *oh, I kind of like failed at this!* a little bit. Um, but also that's probably completely unsurprising to you all. I guess one question was when I first started out and sort of signed up as a participant with a strong inner monologue, did you trust that assertion or did you, or were you, you guys were like this, she doesn't even know [laughs], like she's about to find out.
- 42:18 RTH: I *never* trust those assertions [Kerry laughs] And that's nothing personal about Kerry. People, people just don't know.
- 42:23 Kerry: Yeah.
- 42:25 Mel: Yeah. Russ is so big on that. Russ is like, people think they know, like, y'know, even when I say things like, oh, I was talking to someone and they say they've got a, he's like, yeah, bullshit. [laughs] Like yeah,
- 42:34 Kerry: Yeah, yeah.
- 42:35 Mel: People think they know their inner experience and then when they do DES often find out it's quite different, I think you would say. Right?
- 42:43 RTH: Absolutely. And, and I think that is in, in one important way of looking at it, sort of the major contribution of the work that I've done, I think. If people take my work seriously, then they have to, they have to say, well, Kerry didn't know anything about her in her experience in big time. And if they follow, if they follow that logic, then they would have to say, well, Kerry answering any questionnaire about her inner experience would've been bullshit. Because if she doesn't know what her inner experience is, she doesn't, she isn't gonna be able to answer a Likert scale about her inner experience. [Kerry: Mm-hmm.] And, and the, y'know, organized psychology unravels pretty quickly when you, when you start taking that stuff away.
- 43:24 Mel: Yeah!
- 43:25 RTH: Or exper at least the experiential psychology. *People just don't know.* That's the, that is the bedrock. [Mel: Mm.] Well it's, that's half the bedrock. People don't know, *but they can know.* Because I think my, my impression—you can correct, *please* correct me if I'm wrong about this, Kerry—is that by the time we had sampled 50 samples or whatever of you, your understanding of your own inner experience changed pretty dramatically.
- 43:52 Kerry: Definitely. Yeah. I knew, I, I knew I, um, had inner seeing, but I just didn't realize, I guess... Firstly even like the details of things, um, like when you're, when I'm looking

at my desk right now, I'm not like, wow, I can see this so clearly! [holds up a mug], y'know, but looking at, look, looking back at some of the samples where like the Subaru that was driving on the street [sample 4.2], like that was *so clear*, but I didn't question it. Even, even the nature of the inner seeing to me was actually surprising. Um, yeah. But it also, like when I was looking at the summary, it does in a way feel very, uh, in tune with my personality. Like, um, focusing on color pattern and texture. Like I'm a designer, that's my job. So that, that makes sense. Or, um, in terms of inner speech, often, often attending more to tone and interpersonal nuance than the literal meaning of the words, I would say. Like, relationships are extremely important to me and, and I feel my feelings and I'm, I'm concerned about other people's feelings. And so that, that makes a lot of sense as well.

45:19 And then the final line saying the dynamic interplay between seeing, sensing and speaking, it's so, like, my consciousness is not static or uniform, it's dynamic. And I would say I'm like very spontaneous and kind of like a little bit chaotic at times. [laughs] And so it, it really did feel like completely in line with my personality. So it, it all makes perfect sense. And yet I'm still surprised.

45:45 Mel: Well that's, that's, I like that cuz I wrote majority of that, so that [Kerry laughs] nice to know that like it feels, because honestly I am, I'm, y'know, you write what we think we've uncovered and I could've heard you say today, yeah, I've read it, but it, that it feels a bit jarring to read or whatever. So for you to read it and feel like, yeah, wow, that does feel like a fair description of me. That's like really cool.

46:11 Kerry: Yeah, no, it's, it's so bang on. But also it's just funny that, um, I think if I had, if I was given a prompt to describe my inner experience before doing all of this, I don't think it would've looked like any of that.

46:30 Mel: But that's actually a really interesting thing, Russ, that would be cool to do with people when they start on that day zero, *hey, write a paragraph of what you think your inner experience is like*. I think that would be so interesting to then contrast for people to see how well they did know ourselves. Cuz I, I feel this as well, Kerry, that by the end of the sampling, you feel, you, you notice your, um, understanding of your inner experience really develop and take shape and progress and it's really satisfying. So I think that would be like really cool to see.

47:03 Kerry: Yeah, definitely.

47:05 RTH: So I, I have done that on from time to time. Uh, I don't do it anymore for two reasons, I guess. One is it makes the bracketing of presuppositions, uh, task somewhat more difficult because if you, to the extent that you nail down what you think, then you have to work that much harder to, to set it aside, going, going forwards. Because then you fig.... People sometimes get in a sort of a defensive mode about their own, their own inner experience or what they *wrote about* their own inner experience. And that can go either way. It can can go either I want to, I wanna *reject* it or I wanna *support* it, when, when the actual task is to just bracket it, which is to say neither, neither one of those things. And so the, the more, the more time you spend doing that in the, in, in the beginning, the less, the, the, the less I like it.

47:55 RTH: And the, and so for example, I'm doing a study right now (and it's a typical study that of the kind of study that I do) and it's about OCD. And so we give all kinds of OCD tests and we establish that according to the diagnostic categories or whatever, that we that, that this person has OCD as, as customarily defined. That makes my sampling job *terribly* difficult because now I have to somehow convey *all that stuff, y'know, we spent together looking at those questionnaires. I don't give a shit about that, any of that. And I don't want you to care about any of that. Let's see whether we can forget about that.* That's very difficult to do, cuz our whole relationship has been spent or has been, has been structured on an interest in this kind of question. Now I have to say, *well, y'know, that's not really what I'm interested in.* Well, people aren't gonna hear that or buy that or whatever. So I think that's difficult.

48:43 Kerry: I I actually felt like the first, I dunno, three or four sampling interviews that we did, I was like, *oh my God, I'm doing such a bad job.* And I would, I would hope that a beep would go off when I had, y'know, when I had a lot of inner monologue thoughts happening, cuz I was worried that I had had signed up in a specific box and I was like, *oh my God, I'm failing. My brain's not doing, I'm not performing the way that, that you theoretically want me to perform.* Obviously this is just my own like, I dunno, perfectionist personality coming out. But I like wanted to do a good job as someone who had an inner monologue. And then I was having all these inner-seeing beeps go off. And I was like, this is so annoying. Like, if it had gone off like 30 seconds earlier, I was having a whole conversation in my head [laughs], like,

49:36 RTH: And so that's totally...

49:36 Mel: I would say I, I was doing exactly the same thing. I think that these two spent a lot of time reassuring me early days. Cuz I was like, oh, I'm just like really looking forward to the beep going off when, and like, it's not boring and Russ is like, *the nothingness is not boring to us.* Like, but my perfectionism complex too was like, oh, hopefully like something interesting happens and

49:57 RTH: Always interesting. A lot of, a lot of people are like that.

50:00 Mel: It's fascinating.

50:01 RTH: And I, and I would say that in a, in a very fundamentally important way, the, the what makes DES difficult to do is that you gotta, you gotta live through the first three days about that. When people are, people are, are totally insecure. They don't believe that you're doing, you don't believe what they're, what they're doing. Nobody believes anything about anything. And, and yet you gotta get through that. And I think, I think that is, that is a challenging thing.

50:25 But I, I started to answer Mel's question a bit ago where I said there were two things, two reasons. One is the bracketing of presuppositions. The, the other is that question is not interesting to me anymore. And the, and the reason for that is that I know that people don't, don't know what, what, what they're talking about. And so to, to establish that they don't know what they're talking about is no longer any of any interest to me. I, I can see how somebody coming after me would, would be, would wanna do that. And I did that myself at a, at a, at a time. But, but now it's, y'know, I

just, what, what people, how people characterize their own inner experience, I think is, is total baloney. And so I don't slice it.

51:13 Mel: Kerry, I have a question for you. Um, post doing all of this sampling, has it had any impact on you, your life in terms of like, do you notice different things about yourself now or feel more empathetic, empathetic towards certain parts of your, like, I don't know, has it impacted you?

51:34 Kerry: Um, I would say I feel like, I don't know if it's impacted me too deeply, apart from the fact that I just feel like I *know* myself a lot more. Like I feel this whole process was, um, even, even challenging. I think the concept of me being so confident, *oh, I know myself so well and this is how my brain operates. I have an inner monologue and I'm gonna sign up for this because I'm a perfect person with an inner monologue*, [laughs] and then being proven wrong about my own brain. In a way, (A) I feel like I know myself better and (B) I think I'm more open to being challenged about my thoughts and feelings. Um, so I mean not, I know we were talking about naming emotions and how that's maybe not super helpful, but sort of, I feel like I interrogate my thoughts, feelings, emotions, experience a little bit more rather than thinking, oh, this is how I feel, this is how, this is how I operate. This is, this is the accepted version of myself. I'm like, *hang on, is that actually what I'm experiencing right now?* Um, so I would say, I would say I'm, I'm more skeptical of myself [laughs], but in a healthy way. In a healthy way!

53:06 RTH: And well you should be! [they laugh] I've, I've been thinking, I I've been thinking about writing a book with the title *I'm delusional and so are you* [they laugh]

53:18 Mel: I like that.

53:19 Kerry: I like that, too.

53:22 JBK: Because Mel, you mentioned like now you're kind of doubting your own emotions or like, or what you feel. Is like is this a new development that you're uncertain?

53:35 Mel: It's not doubting them, it's just struggling to even identify them. Do y'know what I mean? Because it's like, I just live life and uh, it just always is like, y'know, you you saw all my sampling, like it's my life is just always this, there's no peaks and troughs for me in terms of inner experience. And then, and then broadly like my, uh, yeah, I dunno. I'm just, I'm just always like this. And so

54:04 JBK: There was some direct, like emotion was frustration at the wifi that it was [inaudible], was buffering. [Mel sample 8.5]

54:12 Mel: Yeah, I guess. Pretty pretty, but, but, but yeah, like quite insubstantial though, like very surface level. And so I've started to be like, hello? Like is this thing on? Do you like feel [laughs] anything [laughs]? Um, yeah, dunno, dunno. I mean it's good. Like I'm not complaining, as I've said to you. And Russ is always saying like, y'know, oh, the beautiful lake that, y'know, reflects life or whatever. Yeah. Like I'm not complaining.

It's very lovely here. I'm quite, um, [laughs], but pretty Zen all the time. But then, y'know, you're so Zen that you're like, yeah, but is that like healthy or not [laughs],

- 54:48 JBK: But there's also, um, there's also vibey stuff where we were never really sure if it was directly experienced. Like you're listening to The 1975, you're bopping along while you're folding laundry. [Sample 5.2] And we couldn't tell if that was like directly experienced, like enjoying the music or if it was, y'know, it was more just autopilot. Um, and, but it was somehow influencing it. And it makes me think of Kerry, like you wondering about like seeing your dad and the Starburst? Like are you feeling nostalgic joy? Or is it like a tiny intrinsic part of like the experience? Or is it not directly experienced at all? but like yeah, I mean there could be nuances that DES misses. Like I don't think it's possible to truly a hundred percent pin anything down
- 55:49 Mel: Russ, I was presuming you have some sort of follow up to that!
- 55:51 JBK: Yeah, I was just expecting. [they laugh]
- 55:56 RTH: So I, I'm, I'm totally persuaded by the limitations of DES. I, I think DES is *one way* of, of accessing inner experience. I'm not, I'm not convinced that it's the best way or the only way or whatever. And, and I think that the beep probably does favor some kinds of inner experiences over others. I, I, I think that's a very, I think those are very difficult questions. I've spent quite a bit of time thinking, thinking about them. I don't know the answer to them. What I can say is that the beep produces very different experiences across different people. So it's not like the beep is always bringing out the same kind of experiences, and Mel and Kerry are two good examples of that. The beep, the beep causes *Kerry* to say, this is what was happening in my experience one moment [snaps fingers], half a second ago. And, and it inspires *Mel* to say something very different in pretty much the same situation. So it's, I don't think of the beep a lot, a lot of my critics, I would say think of, think of that the beep is the whole responsible party. And uh, I don't think that's really true. But, but I, but I agree that it is a contributing factor and limiting factor. If we could get at Kerry's experience or Mel's experience without a beep, I would do it. But I don't know that there is a way.
- 57:22 RTH: What I...
- 57:23 Mel: Oh, I'm sorry.
- 57:23 RTH: Go ahead. Go ahead.
- 57:25 Mel: I was gonna say, um, well I was gonna change tack, so if yours is still in that line, I'm
- 57:30 RTH: Thinking mine was, mine was a change of tack too, I think.
- 57:32 Mel: Okay. No, I was just gonna say like, y'know, obviously I have a million storytelling fresh perspective questions about this stuff, but Russ, I wonder, after having your head in this stuff for 50 years, like you said, what are the, um, unresolved questions for you? Or what, what are the areas that still really interest *you* that you haven't been able to nail down enough or, y'know, like when I ask you like, um, (gosh, I'm always conscious

of how much I say “like” when I talk to you guys!) um, but when I ask you if on brain scans that there are changes and you’ve said, well, very limited things, there are some differences. Like are there tools or different ways outside of your beeper that you’ve considered or would love to try and measure, investigate this sort of stuff?

57:32 Russ comments: RE “(gosh, I’m always conscious of how much I say ‘like’ when I talk to you guys!)”

I think saying “like” is (or at least can be) a careful way of speaking. Like means (or at least can mean) *in a manner of speaking*. It is Mel’s language producer (whatever that is) putting us on notice that she doesn’t mean *exactly* what the words she is using literally convey, but that those words should be understood charitably, that those words in a manner of speaking convey (approximately) what she intends. See the comment at 35:21.

58:33 RTH: That is a difficult and important question, which I’ve, which I’m trying to think about, think through as well. But the que, the question for me is something like: Psychological science—experiential science—is by it’s assumed nature, very reductionistic. So we’re gonna put somebody in a scanner and we’re gonna look for some particular part of the brain that’s supposed to light up and that or something. Or we’re gonna give a questionnaire that’s gonna, gonna correlate with us this other questionnaire. It, it assumes that people are machines and they respond in certain ways, or that averages across people are, are mechanical in certain ways. And I would like to know if, if I, if I could get the answer to some question, whether that’s a, whether that is a, or to the extent to which that is a productive way to think about people. Because I can’t, I, I can’t get behind it.

59:41 I’ve tried to get behind it. I’ve done fMRI studies and I’ve given people questionnaires or whatever, but I, I can’t, I can’t see that it is valuable in a funda, in, in from the standpoint of fundamentally important, what’s val valuable with a capital V or Good with a capital G or True with a capital T or something. I can’t see that any way that psychology has of saying something that’s more imp, important about *Kerry* than we have said, or that’s more important about *Mel* than we have said. And, but those are idiographic things, y’know. We’ve said that Kerry has these kinds of characteristics and Mel has those kinds of characteristics. And we have tried to say that what I call idiographically, which these are male characteristics, regardless of whether the whole world is just like Mel or Mel is unique, and the same for Kerry. Is that the way science should go? Or at least in, in part? It seems that way to me. But that makes me pretty close to the Lone Ranger about that. Everybody wants to know how this correlates with that or whether we should measure this aspect or whatever. And, and I don’t know the answer to that. I do the best I can, but it’s not good enough to answer that question. Did that answer your question? Probably not.

1:01:12 Mel: I mean, yeah, a little. I’m well aware that the question is like an impossible one. But, um, yeah, I think, y’know, you’ve spoken to this before about how some people in the science community, like what... Your approach to this is, I think with, and hopefully this isn’t out of turn for you, but I think it’s, y’know, somewhere in between, um, science, psychology, and philosophy. Y’know, like it gets, it feels dangerously philosophical at points, like in a good way. Like, y’know, because it’s not this black and white thing. And so, so often I think a lot of these questions or conversations feel to

me like very philosophical, more so than scientific in a really great way. And I think that that is an issue with DES, or with any sort of conversation about this stuff. It is that it doesn't fit in any of these neat categories and is so hard to articulate or investigate. Um, and so I think that's sort of in line with what you're saying a bit.

1:02:16 RTH: Pretty close. What I, my reaction to that is that I'm, I have the same objections to the philosophers that I do to the, to the psychologists or whatever. Cuz I, I think they're trying to put Mel into a category and Kerry into a category. And they're trying to say, this is the way inner experience is in general or whatever. And I don't, I don't think we know enough to put to, to know what the categories should be. I don't think.

1:02:46 Mel: And so what the only,...

1:02:47 RTH: I don't think...

1:02:47 Mel: The only, only way then would be to sample like *everyone* to then [JBK laughs] be able to do categories.

1:02:54 RTH: Well that's a, that's a great question. I think the answer to would be the only way to get the right categories would be to sample *enough* people. Whether enough people is *everyone*. I don't know about that. [JBK laughs] I think probably not. [Mel: It's a lot!] But I think *enough* is a lot more than I've done. [Mel: Yeah.] And, uh, because I think everybody, everybody is like Kerry and what Kerry said half an hour ago or whatever was like, I'm a card-carrying inner speaker or whatever, and I'm volunteering to be this, this person. Every, everybody is like that, *including* the philosophers who say, this is the way inner experiences or whatever, or inner experience isn't... They're enamored of their own presuppositions about their inner experience.

1:03:41 Kerry: I also think this is a really interesting conversation specifically within the lens of mental health and kind of like the general trend of over-diagnosing, um, certain, like whatever, anxiety, depression, ADHD. And the perfect example of this is I recently had a, like, a doctor's appointment here and I mentioned like, oh, I'm like considering getting tested for ADHD. And she was like, oh, perfect. We have the best way of doing this. And she gave me an [laughs], like an a multiple-choice test of 80 questions asking me about my general experience, um, with getting distracted and et cetera, et cetera. And I completed it and I scored 60%. But that wasn't enough to investigate further. And the entire time that I was taking the test, I was thinking about DES, because I was like, I don't know any of the answers to these questions! [laughs] And this is how they're gonna decide if I need medication or not!?! Like, I don't know. It's just, it's very interesting with...

1:04:56 RTH: And horrifying.

1:04:57 Kerry: ...with, with mental health specifically because it, it sort of hinges upon the fact that you fully understand your own experience. And this entire practice flips that on its head and proves that wrong. And yet we're like diagnosing everyone and medicating everyone at the same time. So it's kind of crazy.

1:05:20 RTH: It is entirely crazy, from my point of view.

1:05:24 Mel: Yeah. That was brilliantly said. I completely agree. It it, it is, it has become so oversimplified, um, a topic and experience that just absolutely is the furthest thing from simple. [Kerry: Yeah.] Um, and then when exactly when you're introducing medication as a result of that, that's wild.

1:05:46 JBK: Yeah.

1:05:47 RTH: So the, so the answer to your, to your previous question, Mel, which Kerry's providing a good example of, I think if we had enough people with really good explorations of inner experience, the way inner experience really is, what, and DES is an approximation of that—maybe the best approximation, maybe the worst approximation, but an appro an *attempt* at that at least, at least we're attempting, at least we're trying—if we had a *lot* of people who were doing that in, in, in ways that were as good or better than than DES, at the *end* of that time we might have something to say that would be really valuable about who should get medication and who shouldn't. And it would be very different from the way it is now. And the diagnostic categories might, might very well be very different from the, from the way, the way they are now.

1:06:35 JBK: Yeah. I want to go to, cuz Kerry, after we did your sampling, we had the first debriefing, and you were said, you like, I'm, I'm so distracted, like I'm considering getting ADHD test. And my intrinsic reaction was exactly what you just said. Like, me and Russ are very skeptical about these tests and about, y'know, choosing who gets medication. Um, but it's just so interesting, like, and we talked about it in the transcript. [See Kerry Debrief Interview transcript with commentary, 12:47ff] I don't know if you read, because we just kept emailing these things.

1:07:09 Kerry: Yeah, I remember that.

1:07:10 JBK: That might be interesting to go back and read our, our discussion of that. But we basically said just exactly what you said, like, but it's, it's interesting to see you go through the process of like being in front of these questionnaires and realizing *I can't answer that*. Like, it's like, I dunno, like what percentage of the day are you distracted by some other thought and like, [Kerry: Yeah.] you can't answer that.

1:07:34 Kerry: It's all on a scale of 1 to 10, how often do you like try to finish people's sentences; or how often do you like wrestle in your chair when you're sitting in a meeting? It's like, *I have no idea*. [JBK laughs] I'm not conscious of that. (I'm, I'm sorry, I don't wanna say *conscious*.) But I'm not aware or directly experiencing those things every single time they happen. So how am I supposed to give an estimation [laughs] on a scale of 1 to 10? [JBK: Mm-hmm.] Yeah.

1:08:03 RTH: It is a tragedy, I think.

1:08:08 Kerry: Yeah.

- 1:08:10 Mel: And so that's sort of like, y'know, that is part of what led me to Russ and to Julian and then to you, Kerry. I think initially it was (A) Hey, I don't reckon I've got all of this happening like I've read about; that's news to me; but (B) very early on in the piece, I was interested in what can learning about DES, what can DES, what can this whole area of conversation do in relation to mental health and all of that? Because I think that there is a lot of very valuable stuff to be learned within this thinking, uh, uh, applying this sort of thinking to those fields. I don't, it just feels like DES could be very powerful in relation to mental health, I think.
- 1:09:03 JBK: I mean that's, um, I've been applying for PhDs, and my last few proposals were about using DES to inform psychotherapy. But I didn't, I didn't get any, any hits. I don't know if it's the right way to design it. Like me and Russ have talked about this, that psychotherapy is often based on these preconceived categories, and that meshing DES with it, um, like maybe something new has to be built out of in your experience. But, um, but basically I didn't, I didn't get any PhDs. I, I just think it's so different to how the field is operating and how psychology is operating that people didn't understand what I was trying to do [inaudible].
- 1:09:46 RTH: If they under, if they understood what you were suggesting, they wouldn't want to have anything to do with you.
- 1:09:52 JBK: Yeah.
- 1:09:52 RTH: That's, that is the dilemma.
- 1:09:55 JBK: Yeah.
- 1:09:58 RTH: And it's the, it's, it's, y'know, it's been sort of my dilemma over the course of the, my career. What, what, what do I do about this? Because I *could have* spent all of my time or more of my time or whatever investigating some particular category of inner experience, like OCD or depression or anxiety or whatever. And to some degree I've done that. But I could have, I could have spent *more* of my time doing that, but I think that would've been a mistake. I thought it would've been a mistake, and I still think it would've been a mistake. But I'm not sure about that because the, the, the dilemma for Mel, what Mel was just saying, is Mel would like to know *what I have found*, but what I have found is *I haven't found what I need to know*. What I have found is that *we have to look forwards at something*. And that is harder, harder to sell. I think it's easier to sell something concrete. This is, this is the medication that has been shown to improve OCD if you, or ADHD or whatever. That's an easy sell. To say we have to really think through about things from this perspective and that perspective and this other perspective. That's tougher.
- 1:11:20 Kerry: I I, in a way though, think it's an *easy* sell, because the general population is obsessed with personality tests. Y'know, 16 personalities, Myers-Briggs, all of that. Um, pe, people love even like horoscopes being told about themselves. People love or, or even I, I also think that, um, therapy speak and, um, all that has become so big because people are trying to categorize their experience, and are in desperate, like, people *want to know* is what I'm feeling normal, et cetera, et cetera. But I feel like if this was,

I dunno know if *sold* is the right word, but like packaged up and sold to a wider audience of that, of it with the sense of, um, kind of *everything you know about yourself is wrong. Go through this process and you'll figure it out*. [JBK: Mm-hmm.] I feel like people would eat that up! Like people wanna know themselves more deeply. There's, there's a need for that and a desire for that. Um, I don't know if you're trying to like advertise to get more people to participate in this, but I actually think that pe there's, there's such a desire to understand yourself, and this process is really your best way of doing that.

1:12:54 RTH: I agree with all of that. [Kerry laughs] I have not, I personally have not tried to package it. [JBK: Mm-hmm.] And what, what, and, and I have debated with myself quite often about whether that's a personality failing of mine or whatever. What my, my re refutation of that is basically: I am an employee of the State of Nevada, and I owe the State of Nevada and the people in it my best understanding. That's, that's what they're paying me for. And for, for me to package something and make a, make my own profit about that is what psychologists *do*, but I don't think that's fair or honest or something. [Kerry: Mm-hmm.]

1:13:42 I could package it, cuz I agree, people wanna know. But it, but for me to *sell* it would make it seem like *I know*, and in the book title it I gave you is, *I'm delusional and so are you*. That's the, the *I'm delusional* part is the part that, the.... What people want, what people want is for me to say, I'm *not* delusional and I can tell you how you can *not* be delusional! But I don't....

1:14:05 Mel: Which is true. If I think about all those, y'know, pick what sort of hip psychologist of the month it is at the moment, y'know? [Kerry: Mm-hmm.] Jay Shetty podcast or Mel Robbins is doing the rounds at the moment, or insert whoever. That's exactly their approach. It's like, *Hey, I've actually worked you out and here's what you are*. [Kerry: Yeah.] And that's what you *don't* do, Russ,...

1:14:28 RTH: That's right. I don't do that.

1:14:29 Mel: ...um, which is obviously the good bit about it. But then exactly to *perhaps* the detriment of DES expanding, that's the thing that you grapple with a lot.

1:14:40 RTH: Correct.

1:14:42 Mel: Yeah. That's really interesting. Cuz that is the commonality between all those, like household name psychologists, [Kerry: Yeah.] isn't it? They definitely sell it as *I, I've worked it out!*

1:14:54 RTH: I'm pretty sure I could have done that. I'm, I've got enough salesmen in me [JBK laughs] to, to have to have been able to do that. I have not done it.

1:15:06 JBK: And I wonder, I guess, [Mel and JBK overspeak] sorry, you wanna go ahead Mel and then I'll ask [inaudible].

1:15:11 Mel: Oh, sorry. I was just gonna say, Kerry, like I know, um, you have done therapy and stuff, like how does that compare to like DES's version of trying to unpack yourself?

How does that compare to like more traditional therapy from a knowing perspective for you?

1:15:30 Kerry: Um, I think like more traditional therapy is sort of open-ended questions that allow you to decide, work through your feelings and, and, and your experience. And, and I think the, the most beneficial thing about therapy is that my therapist will ask a question, I'll respond and then she actually won't say anything. [JBK: Mm-hmm.] And then I'll just keep speaking until I've *completely* worked through something, she'll pause again and *then* she'll respond. So with therapy, it's, it's like I feel like I am saying *this is how I feel and this, I know this* and I'm working through this and whatever, and I'm like, I, I'm, I don't wanna say in control, but I'm deciding what things are for myself as I'm working them through.

1:16:21 Whereas with DES, I'll be, I'll say, [laughs] and I, I think the, the hard thing is I do think the benefit of DES is not just the beeps, but it's actually the interview where I'll say, *oh, this is where what I was experiencing*. And then very classically, Russ would be like, *well, I dunno if we can trust that and here's why*. And so it makes you think more deeply about what you're actually experiencing. Whereas in therapy it's almost like, oh, this is what I'm experiencing, and the therapist accept, accepts that, and then you, you kind of move on. Whereas DES is actually, I don't wanna say more challenging than therapy. I think both have their challenges. But, um, it does, it kind of goes back to what I was saying about like, how I'm different now having done this is I'm like more open to challenging what I, my assumptions about myself, I guess. I don't know if that answered the question, but I would say therapy, the therapist, just your response and Russ does not! [laughs] [Mel: Yeah.] Which, which is a very interesting, it's just, it's completely different between the two of them.

1:17:42 RTH: I, I was a therapist at one time. [Kerry: Oh, yeah?!] [Mel: Were you?!] And I, and are, and I gave up doing it because I thought I was doing just what Kerry described, and I thought it was, I thought it was operating in the realm of, *Kerry's only telling me what Kerry wants to tell me. And that's, and, and what Kerry chooses to tell me is probably what got her into trouble in the first place*. So I don't, I don't really wanna, I don't wanna reify that. And yet I didn't have any good way of thinking, of knowing what I should say or whatever, whatever, to help her get beyond that. And I think there are good therapists. So I'm, I'm not, I'm not being critical of, of therapy, but I, I wanted, it was diff it was difficult for me, let's put it that way. [Kerry: Mm-hmm.] I was thought of as a good therapist, but I, I, I, I'm, I'm, I like to know what I'm talking about too much, I guess.

1:18:45 Kerry: Yeah. It's interesting to compare the two, for sure.

1:18:50 JBK: Can I ask, what made you want to go aeronautical engineering to therapy? Wasn't that what you were doing before?

1:18:59 RTH: I went from aeronautical engineering to being a trumpet player. [JBK laughs]

1:19:03 Mel: What?

1:19:05 RTH: I wanna, I always had wanted to be a trumpet player and, uh, and a classical, classical orchestral trumpet player as, and it was sort of a hobby or whatever, and I thought I'd given it up when I went to engineering school and whatever. But the, but I turned out I couldn't give it up. So I quit my job, essentially, as an engineer, which was keeping me out of the Vietnam War because I was making, I was an engineer making nuclear weapons, figuring out where nuclear weapons were going. That was what my job was. What,

1:19:36 Mel: What!?! God, I need to come interview you, Russ! Wow! [laughs]. My kind of life!

1:19:40 JBK: Yeah.

1:19:40 RTH: I, I worked for Sandia Laboratories, which is a name maybe you're familiar with, but was a big Atomic Energy Commission, what was now the Department of Energy. But I, I was, I was a Staff Member, which is what they call engineers. And, uh, but I, and I liked that job. It was an interesting job and an important job, whatever, but I wanted to be a trumpet player. So I quit that job and became a trump. I, uh, auditioned for The Army Band. The Army Band that's in Washington DC. (It's actually Fort Myer, across the river.) And, uh, and my job became, uh, uh, primarily for, for a couple of years actually playing Taps for people who were killed in Vietnam. And, and, uh, and there were two, two important things about that. One, one is, it was, it was clear to me because these guys were the people that I had gone to basic training with, they went to Vietnam. I went to my cushy job and playing taps in Arlington Cemetery. And so, so it was an important distinction. Y'know, I had skills or whatever, and they didn't have, and but, but, uh, the unfairness or the capriciousness or whatever of the universe was not lost on me as I played like 500 funerals in Arlington Cemetery over a couple years. And, uh, that was one thing.

1:21:02 And then the other thing was, I, I went to the Arlington Library and put books in my car because my, my job was basically to sit in the cemetery and wait until the funeral came, and get out and play Taps and get back in my car and wait for the next funeral. And so most of my time was sitting in my car in the funeral, in the cemetery. And, uh, and I read the kinds of things that people who are engineers don't get a chance to read: history and literature and poetry and psychology and sociology and philosophy and psychology. And eventually I found, I had read the entire psychology literature as, as curated by the Arlington Laboratory, uh, Arlington Library, which meant I had read all the original sources in, in psychology, basically. And, uh, so I deduced from that, that I had an interest in psychology. And then went directly into graduate school in psychology, having basically no undergraduate training in psychology.

1:22:04 Kerry: That's so interesting.

1:22:05 Mel: So you're like Psychology Rainman!

1:22:10 Kerry: You, you sound like a movie character!

1:22:12 Mel: Yeah. That I was thinking that too. All of that sounds made up!

1:22:15 Kerry: [laughs] It *does* sound made up!

1:22:17 Mel: I know you're telling the truth, but like, that sounds like a plot to a really great movie! [laughs].

1:22:20 Kerry: Yeah! like *Good Will Hunting*.

1:22:22 Mel: Yeah. Yeah! Exactly. [Kerry: Yeah. Yeah.]

1:22:25 RTH: So this is my third, third, third career basically. Third or fourth career.

1:22:29 Kerry: That's so cool. I, oh,

1:22:34 RTH: But they, when I, when I was a engineer working for Sandia, I had, I had the knowledge that I was interested in people, and, and that I should randomly sample, I should randomly sample people. That, that would be an interesting thing to do. Cuz I was, y'know, my job was to take a look at random samples of experiments. I was, I was an experimental, I was an analyzer of experiments, let's put it that way. Other people's experiments—I solved their problems for them. And then I, in the, i I, there, there were no beepers, there were no, no *possibility* of beepers at that time. This was the time when computers were, y'know, the smallest possible computers were big desktop. Desktop. And I figured out on the way to my graduate training how to build a beeper and, uh [JBK: Mm-hmm.] When I got to my clinical training [inaudible], Carl Sipprelle, who was the director of clinical training, said to me, "well, Russ, what do you wanna do while you're here?" And I said, "I wanna randomly sample thoughts." And he said, "well, what is that?" And I told him, and he said, "well, I don't think that's possible, but it seems like a good idea."

1:23:49 Mel: And you've been trying to prove people wrong for 50 years! [laughs]

1:23:53 RTH: I would, I started out trying to prove people *right*. I thought I was... I gave questionnaires at the moment, at the beep, like it's done now in ESM. So I was actually the first person to give people beepers in psychological experience. And, uh, and I've been doing that for 50 years

1:24:10 Kerry: You ever considered making the beeper an app?

1:24:13 RTH: I have an app.

1:24:14 Kerry: You have an app?!?

1:24:15 RTH: Doesn't work as well as the beeper.

1:24:17 Mel: Yeah. I, I asked similar things at the that as well. I was like, Hey, do y'know what I reckon if I could just get this on my phone? He was like, we've tried this

1:24:23 Kerry: AirPods. Yeah, yeah. I do the same. Walking around with like, the one ear thing and like a Walkman [laughs] in public is so funny.

- 1:24:36 RTH: It's an old, it's an old-fashioned technology. And, and the, I, I think if I, if I had enough money, and so this is, this is, y'know, if I, I could have made more money and then I would've had more money to spend on this. If I had enough money, or if I just spent the money that I have (cuz I've got money), I could have had a, an, um, an app, I could have had hardware design to do a better job than the one I've got. But so far I haven't. The problem, the problem is that Apple controls what you can do on, on an iPhone and Android controls what you can do. And you can't, it turns out it's very difficult to actually deliver a good beep. [snaps fingers] You would think that would be an easy thing to do, but it's not. Maybe now it is, cuz it's, y'know, the last time I tried this was, excuse me, several operating systems ago. And they can change their operating system and maybe I could do it now.
- 1:25:29 JBK: Yeah. Russ sent me some instructions for doing it on iPhone, and I still have to try out if that works, but my mom is curious. She wants to be beeped. So I might try it with her.
- 1:25:42 RTH: Well, lemme know what, what happens. So you, so you can defeat it by using, by programming alarms at random intervals. [Kerry: Mm-hmm.]
- 1:25:49 RTH: And I've given people instructions for how to do that because the alarm actually, well, you, you have to design the beep. But, uh, so the way I get it.... The, the, the problem, the problem is that Apple keeps track of, of what they, what, what they allow you to do. And, and they have quite a bit of logic that goes between what you want it to do and what it *actually does*. And so when you, when you give an audio signal, it has to decide whether this is an audio signal, and then it has to decide whether they want to send it to your earphone or to your speaker and or whatever. And all that stuff takes some time. And so the beep, instead of being a beep [snaps fingers], becomes a mmmmbbbeeep [gradually ramps up the volume]. So, so I've figured out how to defeat *that* by sending a beep that is actually a, a soundless beep for a while, and then has a beep. So that you tell the, you tell the thing to beep a second from now, and then you, you send one second of nothing and then a and then a beep, and you can get around that. So that, so you, so you can use an alarm that has these delayed beeps and uh, and they're actually pretty good. But, but then you have to program the time into the alarm. And that's a little challenging.
- 1:26:57 Mel: I think one of the beautiful things about Russ's study of all of this, and Russ in general, is that he's so dedicated to the craft, like, or, um, not even the craft, the, the act of discovery of people. You are so just *purely interested* in understanding the inner experience of humans. And that is why it is where it is because, y'know, to our points earlier about these household name psychologists, y'know, if he were more interest, if, if his ego was bigger, I think honestly, then it would be an app right now, and it would be this or whatever. But Russ is more interested in the study itself, which I think is the, a great, noble, beautiful, pure, awesome thing. And, uh, why you are so captivating and so intelligent and articulate. Um, and I think that that is the great grapple of DES though, because like it's so great and we would love so many people to be able to experience it in a more accessible manner, but that comes at the cost of the purity of it all.

- 1:28:08 RTH: So I would agree with all of that, except that I would say I, I'm less interested in the craft as I am interested in *Mel*. I would like to get *Mel*, I would like to, I would like to know about *Mel's* experience. And I would like to know about *Kerry's* experience. Everything, everything else is secondary to that actually, including the craft and the beeper and the earphones and the...
- 1:28:29 Mel: Yes. Well, exactly. And so that's why there's not an app. And, and that's why it isn't terribly accessible, because you don't, it doesn't interest you. You are interested in finding out who we are.
- 1:28:43 RTH: Yeah. Yeah. I, that's, that's true. But I, I also, I also am interested in the science of it. I, because of what Kerry was saying earlier on about taking a questionnaire. Well, taking a questionnaire can't possibly, can't possibly be the right way to do it. I mean, sooner, sooner or later that has, that house of cards has gotta fall, I think. And, and, and given medications on the basis of questionnaires or whatever, sooner or later, *that* has gotta fall.
- 1:29:13 Mel: Yeah. And I think that brings us to why we're all here, because I do think, y'know, to Kerry's points earlier, I think the culture is changing there. I think that the hunger and curiosity is greater than ever with all of this sort of stuff. And I think people are smarter than the industry currently gives them credit for. I think they're more curious than they're given credit, and I think that they want to know more about themselves at a much deeper level than the superficial nature of the questionnaires. I think the craving's there!
- 1:29:51 RTH: I think, I think people know what's true. They, they know, they know, they know the nature of truth, let's put it that way. They don't know what's true, but they know a true story from a... They, they know they're interested in a true story rather than a phony story. I think that's true. They're confused about it, and they, they get it wrong a lot, but, but it's not because they don't know the fundamental difference between something that's true and something that's [inaudible].
- 1:30:17 JBK: My sister, uh, has been making me listen to the telepathy tapes, this podcast, I don't know if you guys know this one. Um, it's about non-verbal autistic people and their ability to read minds, like is the premise of the podcast. Um, and it, it's [laughs] it's like, I guess all the rage these days. And my sister's very like, like she's an academic, so I was surprised that she got into this thing that is kind of spiritual, like the mind reading thing. Um, but I think the, like, I listened to some of it and I think like the premise is that we don't know anything about consciousness and that the materialistic worldview is wrong. Like the show keeps going on that there's more beyond just materialism and the study of... But yeah, I don't like agree with the conclusion that [laughs] like there's some spiritual connection or whatever. Like, I'm lost there. But I, I see as you're saying, Mel, about like this drive to that there's more beyond what psychology is giving us and what neuroscience is giving us, and there's like this deep interest.

1:31:35 Mel: I agree. And I would really love for us to be able to [laughs] satiate that interest. Believe me! [laughs]

1:31:43 RTH: So,

1:31:43 Mel: Um, yeah,

1:31:44 RTH: So in, in the, the distinction between Kerry and Mel is totally interesting. And I think people would be, people *will* be interested in it, but I think that, I think another hook in is the celebrity angle. I think people would like to know what is in *Drake's* inner experience in, in, uh, *Djokovic's* inner experience or in *Trump's* inner experience.

1:32:15 Mel: Mm. That's true. We have spoken about this before. You've suggested this to me before.

1:32:19 Kerry: Well, even on the website, when I saw you interviewed Michael Pollan, I was like, Michael Pollan! That is so cool.

1:32:24 JBK: [laughs].

1:32:27 RTH: Well, I, I, I have been pushing this narrative for quite a while because I, I do think that that satisfies *my* idiographic itch trying to get Michael Pollan right, or Djokovich, or Beyonce, or whoever trying to get them right. And at the same time finding something that is interesting to the somebody other than just me

1:32:48 Mel: To the normie. [laughs]. Yeah. Yeah. I,

1:32:53 Kerry: Uh, I've, I've gotta run. Um,

1:32:57 JBK: I, I do have quick kind of housekeeping questions if you have like five minutes.

1:33:02 Kerry: Yeah, ah, yeah.

1:33:04 JBK: Um, yeah, one thing is the, sorry, I edited these videos. Like one of you, Kerry, and one of you, uh, you Mel, that's almost done and I'll send it to you. But I just wanted to run the thumbnail by you and the title. I want it to be like, *Does Kerry have an inner monologue?* And then on the thumbnail, I wanted text that says, *usually not* and the picture of you. And then of course the video, like I explained that, but like, if you think that's a fair characterization. I mean, you did have some like in your speaking, but it wasn't the main thing going on.

1:33:41 Kerry: Yeah, I think that's a fair characterization. I almost think you could like, I don't know if there's enough space on like a thumb now to do this, but, um, leaning into the idea that I thought I was an inner monologue participant and like kind of proven wrong, I dunno. I, um, you're kind of doing that, but I almost playing into the fact that I actually thought I had an inner monologue.

1:34:09 JBK: Yeah. I might re-edit in some, some clips from today where I think you said stuff like that.

1:34:15 RTH: Kerry, Kerry was beautifully articulate about that today. [laughs], I, I can't imagine wanting, wanting to do that website or that, that, uh, thing that you're saying without editing in some of what she said, I'm a card carrying whatever! [Mel: Mm, mm, mm.] and then I'm disappointed... Cuz y'know, all, all that stuff is, if you're interested in that as the, as the hook. She was great about that today.

1:34:39 JBK: And, and for Mel, I wanted it to be like, actually same question. Does Mel have a inner monologue? And the thumbnail just says No* with an asterisk. Cuz I'm an academic and can't, can't fully say no. Like maybe at other samples you [laughs] you would. Um, but I'll also send you the video, Mel, because I haven't, we haven't done that. We can look at that first before.

1:35:01 Mel: Sounds great. Um,

1:35:03 JBK: And then my other question was kind of about the monetizing thing. I wanted to put something somewhere in these videos saying like kind of a Kickstarter, like if I can raise 1,500, I can spend another month making videos and maybe have two more videos. Um, so I, yeah, I don't want to like be profiting off of like your guys' experience, but it would be nice to have more time to, cuz there's more I want to say, y'know [laughs]. So I think it'd be cool to keep working on it. But does that feel like to anyone? Like an abuse?

1:35:40 Mel: No, just unless if you make a million dollars, like sling some are way

1:35:43 JBK: Way [laughs],

1:35:45 Mel: Like, just a little bonus for us. But [laughs],

1:35:48 JBK: I doubt, I doubt that will

1:35:51 Mel: Y'know, like if you, if it gets astronomical, I'll wanna cut. Yeah.

1:35:54 Kerry: Yeah. I feel for me, [laughs]

1:35:56 Mel: Of course.

1:35:58 JBK: Yeah. Would you think about that, Russ?

1:36:01 RTH: It's okay with me.

1:36:02 JBK: Yeah. [Mel: Great.] That's my housekeeping.

1:36:07 Mel: Well, I just wanna say that as always, I find these conversations so interesting and fascinating and very much appreciate everyone's time across a really *long* time now. Y'know, like we've been doing, we've been doing this for literally years now, [laughs],

which is crazy. Um, and yes, certainly if, if any of you are ever in New York City where I now should be for the most part, um, please let me know. I'd love to get a coffee with you and, and discuss these things with you in real life. [JBK: Mm-hmm.] Um, but it's not lost on me. The time commitment, all of this is, and the psychological commitment and y'know, whatever. So thank you. cuz I think it's really interesting and, and I'm very subscribed forever. Don't be strangers!

1:36:51 Kerry: [laughs], you feel the same way. I feel very privileged to be having, to be able to have experienced this and, um, know myself far better than I ever have. Um, it feels really cool to do it as I was turning 30! Cuz I feel like that's a big reckoning and I'm like, *who am I!*? But I was doing this in the background, so Very cool.

1:37:14 JBK: And you were turning 30 and moving at the same time.

1:37:17 Kerry: Yeah. [laughs], there's a lot happening.

1:37:20 RTH: Well, I, my guess is I've enjoyed it as at least as much as you all have. So I'm, I'm totally happy to have been a participant here.

1:37:31 Mel: Thank you.

1:37:32 Kerry: Thank you. Thanks guys.

1:37:33 Mel: Great. All right. Well, we'll chat on email I suppose,

1:37:37 RTH: And if I can and, and Mel, if, if I can be of assistance in your project, lemme know.

1:37:42 Mel: Oh, but of course. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I'll keep you updated. But if, if, if and when projects get up off the ground, you will definitely be of assistance. Let me tell you.

1:37:51 RTH: And I guess I, I guess I was,

1:37:52 JBK: I can help with any editing or whatever, like, I'm glad to do that.

1:37:54 RTH: Thank you. My, my plug up. You, you, you said you were gonna be talking to some high powered person. The high, the high powered person is the person who would know the person who would make an interesting story.

1:38:07 Mel: Yeah.

1:38:08 RTH: Kerry, Mel and Celebrity X or whatever.

1:38:13 Mel: Exactly. Yeah. To, I feel like now I'm at a point where, okay, I have that understanding that I craved of this whole area and now it's finally time to then take this out into the world. And so it's sort of a step before, um, pitching a documentary. It's a, it's a softer version of that. It's having conversations with people that are far more accomplished than I, that I know through my network in this city and stuff, and saying, Hey, like this is a thing that I've been working on and I think we've got something here. What's your

take? Where would you take it? Do you wanna make it with... Y'know, that's the level I'm at. So one of those conversations is tomorrow of just having, having those chats.

1:38:53 RTH: And, and I would say that from the, from the standpoint of a documentary to a *series*, a celebrity a week or a celebrity every month or something like that, a different person every month, I think [Mel: Yeah.] would be of, I think would be of interest to a

1:39:09 Mel: Yeah. Like a six-part series with, with six different celebrities...

1:39:12 RTH: Or a 60-part series!

1:39:13 Mel: ...would be amazing. Yeah.

1:39:17 RTH: Sort of sort of like the *Riding around in cars with Jay Leno* or whatever.

1:39:17 Russ comments: RE "*Riding around in cars with Jay Leno*"
That is a mashup of *Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee* (with Jerry Seinfeld) and *Jay Leno's Garage*.

1:39:21 Mel: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. *Carpool Karaoke*, but psychology!

1:39:25 Kerry: Right. [all laugh]

1:39:27 RTH: Basically the same kind of a principle that

1:39:29 Mel: Yeah.

1:39:30 RTH: Except instead of in a car and do DES and then some [inaudible] about that.

1:39:35 Kerry: Yeah. It kind of reminds me of, um, do you remember when our like magazines used to post, like, have articles that'd be like *Celebrities. They're just like us*, the grocery store too, stuff like that. Like, I, I almost think getting like that detailed in someone's mind kind of makes them [Mel: Yeah] it makes you feel closer to them in a, in a weird way that people crave.

1:39:35 Russ comments: RE "*Celebrities. They're just like us*"
Us Magazine had a weekly feature called "Stars—They're Just Like Us."

1:39:58 Mel: Yeah. Yeah. But obviously you have to find the right kind of celebrity. Like we were saying, y'know, they have to be inherently interested in psychology because what you're asking them to do is like the most hyper vulnerable thing as a person with a very public profile. It's one thing for us, but like if you are Taylor Swift, you gotta outweigh the pros and cons financially of opening yourself up so much. So anyway, all of that, definitely think there's something there. Certainly eager to explore all of this. And that is what I'm gonna start to do and I will keep you all updated every step of the way, obviously.

1:40:28 Kerry: Awesome. Thank you guys.

1:40:31 JBK: Keep your browser open as usual for the upload.

1:40:34 RTH: My [inaudible] to everybody.

1:40:33 Kerry: Yeah, yeah. Everything

1:40:34 RTH: Thank you all very much.

1:40:36 Mel: Bye.