

Michael Pollan
Michael Interview 2

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the February 9 interview with Michael that is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/2f6kDd_SI0o. In brown are conversations about the Descriptive Experience Sampling process that took place during the interview. In green are 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

Michael: Michael Pollan

- 0:04 RTH: [starts recording] Got it. And then the usual, the usual rule applies that the recording belongs to you until such time as you say, it can be something else other than, other than that. [laughs]
- 0:16 Michael: Okay. Fair enough. I agree.
- 0:19 RTH: Okay. And this is gonna be day 2, if I'm recalling correctly.
- 0:24 Michael: Yes, yes it is.
- 0:26 RTH: Anything we should..
- 0:28 Michael: Go ahead. Go ahead,
- 0:29 RTH: Go for it.
- 0:30 Michael: Um, and a little different in that the, uh, first of all, I was kind of on vacation. This is ... The recordings are all from, uh, February 7th. And we were out of town. Uh, we rented this cottage at Stinson Beach. It had been my birthday the day before. So it was a different kind of rhythm to the day *and* a different kind of rhythm to the beeper. Beeper was like fast and furious. I had six beeps within an hour and a half. Um, so that was different. Um, so some are a little repetitive.
- 1:05 RTH: So the, so the, the beeper *is* random and it can go from zero to to 60 minutes, basically. So it would be theoretically possible to get six beeps in six minutes, or,
- 1:19 Michael: Yeah, theoretically. There was *one* beep that was, I wondered about the machine, cuz it was very fast and it turned itself off, but I took it as a beep. I didn't turn it off.
- 1:36 RTH: So there's a number of possibilities for that. One, the, the thumb wheel on the beeper is a little picky, more picky than I would like. But that's the, that's the way those things are. And, and if you twist the thumb wheel a little bit, either by

bumping it up against something or else you can, the machine thinks that it's turned itself off and back on again. So that may very well be what happened.

2:00 Michael: Well, it gave me a random beep, which is the point.

2:01 RTH: That's, that's really right. [Michael: Yeah.] All right. I would say, let's go for 'em and, uh, see what we got.

SAMPLE 2.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

2:08 Michael: Yeah. Okay. I put on the beeper at 10:00 AM. Uh, the first beep was at 10:31. Judith, who's my wife, is reading to me (we're both sitting on the couch reading), and she interrupts me to read from her book. She's reading *The Man Without Qualities*. I hear at, at the beep, the word "knowledge" in a sentence that precedes it, that, that proceeds "knowledge is a mode of conduct, a passion." I'm *completely* confused at the meaning of this sentence. It's a very intricate sentence to hear read aloud and precisely why she thinks I need to hear it. Um, so the thought that's forming in my head is *Why? Huh?* It's not particularly well formed. I'm hoping as time goes by, it will answer itself. Um, but that, that was the, the moment was *that word* and *that thought*. "Knowledge." *Why?*

3:09 RTH: So she's reading to you, is that, is that right?

3:12 Michael: Yeah. [RTH: Okay.] Yeah, she stopped. She, she looked up from her book and said, y'know, "gotta hear this." And I didn't understand the import [laughs] of the passage or why it was relevant to me. Um, I mean, the book is, it's a very abstract book full of, y'know, philosophy of life. I've never read it, but from everything she tells me. But she thought this was a very meaningful sentence. "Knowledge is a mode of conduct, a passion." The character was basically, um, saying knowledge could be *negative*. It could be a negative thing. Um, too much knowledge or the quest for knowledge. Um, and that there's an ethics attached to it. But, y'know, we, we, we proceeded to discuss it later, but *at that moment* I'm like, my brow is knitted. I'm like, *why are you telling me this and interrupting my, my book?*

4:00 RTH: So the why is about why is *she* telling you this, rather than why did the writer write that? Or [Michael: Yes, yes.] why does knowledge had its place in this sentence? It's specifically about her motive or her...

4:15 Michael: Yeah. I didn't spend a lot of time trying to parse the sentence. That's not where my mind was. My mind was kind of, *why am I hearing this?*

4:23 RTH: Okay. And, and is, are there any details of, of that, of that thought, how it's present to you? Like, are you saying to yourself, quote, "why?" unquote? Or, or is it...

4:34 Michael: No, I wouldn't say it was verbal. It was just kind of like the way you'd go *Huh?* Y'know, um, it, it wasn't, it wasn't, well, it wasn't shaped. It was just kind of a, uh, a mental question forming itself. It was, I wouldn't say it was verbal necessarily, or I mean, whether it was *Why? Or Huh?* y'know, I, I couldn't tell you. Um, it was a, it

was a pretty kind of, um, it wasn't a formed intellectual reaction. It was just kind of like, y'know, when you, when you encounter something that's obscure, this kind of question mark forms in your head.

4:34

Russ comments: There are at least four pretty distinct possibilities that are consonant with Michael's description so far: (1) He is innerly saying "Why?" with a questioning tone that might be rendered as *Huh?* (2) There is a thought ongoing without words that could be expressed as *Why?* even though that word itself is not present. (3) There is bodily reaction taking place that involves a knitting brow and/or an exhaled *Huh*, and that bodily reaction is recognized as a *Why?* question. (4) There is a felt emotional response, that might be explained to an interlocutor as a questioning feeling of *Why?*

But those alternatives are overlaid or clouded over by that fact that this beep is from two days ago (see 0:30)—this is what I call a stale beep, when I prefer fresh beeps. I think it unlikely (which is to say, possible—perhaps Michael has a very refined ability to retain details) that distinctions such as are required here can be faithfully teased apart in stale-beep interviews. From the standpoint of DES practice, the question is what to do about this. I could have said, at 1:05 or now, "We need fresh beeps. Let's cancel this and do better next time." But I don't say that, because I accept the fact that participants are not skilled at the DES task, and that they reveal their lack of skill in a variety of ways. Michael's gathering of stale beeps is by no means exceptional. Nearly all DES participants undermine the process in one way or another, usually with the best of intentions. The DES skill is at some point to weave the process's desirable procedures (here, of fresh beeps) into the conversation, *after* the desirability of the procedure becomes apparent (here, that it would be desirable to have fresher beeps).

So I will proceed to inquire about the experiential aspects, *not* because I think it will be possible to get a high-fidelity apprehension of the experience at this beep (which I don't), but because we may be able to use some of the conversation about this beeped experience to make us more skillful *next time*. That is the heart of the iterative process.

I could have, prior to sampling, given Michael a checklist of sampling procedural requirements. Such a standardized procedure is required by nearly all psychological investigations. I think such a requirement is misguided, so I don't do it. The standardized checklist conveys, like it or not, these instructions to the participant: (a) pay more attention to the checklist than to your experience; (b) accept that the psychologist is the expert and you are the ignorant subject; (c) acknowledge that there is a best practice here and thou shalt follow it; (d) understand that your opinion is not valued; (e) recognize that efficiency is the ultimate good; and probably some other negative connotations.

Any one of those messages will kill an investigation of inner experience, so I don't do anything remotely resembling a standardized procedure, other than use the beeper and the earphone. That is not sloth or sloppiness. It is necessary if one cares about fidelity.

The penalty (perhaps I shouldn't be so negative, and call consequence) is that we might "waste" a day or two of sampling.

This laissez-faire instructional procedure requires that the DES interviewer have some substantial interpersonal skills, because I will have to tell Michael, probably

repeatedly, that *this is not good enough*, and *if we want to get to your experience, we will have to do better*. The skill is to give that message in such a way that Michael will understand it as paying him the highest compliment—genuine interest in his genuine experience—rather than merely delivering criticisms where he falls short. Whether I am successful in conveying that can be judged by Michael and the viewer.

5:18 RTH: So the ques..., one question is, is this, do you experience this as being a mental thing in, in your head thing? As opposed to a bodily...?

5:28 Michael: Yeah,

5:29 RTH: I'm not, I'm not twisting around or whatever. That could convey that...

5:33 Michael: Yeah. No, I think that there probably was a kind of, I mean, I don't remember this specifically, but it was that moment where you would question would form in your head and you'd knit your brow, y'know, like that. [RTH: Right.] That's kind of where I was.

5:33 Russ comments: This turn is pretty explicit evidence that Michael is not making the kind of distinction that I find important. I asked him (5:18) for a straightforward (if subtle) distinction: at 10:31am, was your experience mental or bodily? But he responds with many subjunctifiers (1. I think, 2. probably, 3. kind of, 4. I mean, 5. I don't remember specifically, 6. you would remember, 7. you would knit, 8. y'know, 9. like that; one can quibble about one or another of those, but either way, it is a lot), suggesting that this is not a clearly recalled experience but rather, probably, an inferential general account about what would be reasonable in such a situation. That is, his 5:33 turn is *not at all* about experience at the moment of the beep. Why not? There are lots of possibilities—he didn't understand the question, the beep is stale, his experience is such that that question is difficult or impossible, and so on. I'm not a mind reader—it is not my job to infer which of those is important. What I can do is try, *for the future*, to eliminate some possible-to-eliminate competing possibilities, which means that sooner or later Russ and Michael will have to have a conversation about stale vs. fresh beeps.

5:47 RTH: And so, was your experience of knitting your brow? Or was your experience of the cognitive e

5:52 Michael: It was the cognitive. Yeah. [RTH: Okay.] I'm, I'm guessing it had that outward manifestation. [RTH: Okay.] It was a pretty primal feeling. It wasn't, y'know, it was just that kind of, um, when you're confused. There's another, I think there's another moment of confusion too, in this. [RTH: Okay.] Um, and I didn't know how to register confusion, y'know, was it, y'know, how, how verbal was it? It didn't seem very verbal. It was a state of mind that I was aware of a confused state of mind, but to say whether it was emotional, sensory, or verbal, I'd be, I'd be hard pressed.

6:30 RTH: How about between emotional and cognitive? Like, confusion is one thing. Thinking why is, seems like another thing. Could be anyway.

6:41 Michael: Yeah. It was some, I mean, I would say it leaned more toward cognitive, but it did have a kind of emotional texture to it. Cuz I was also being interrupted. It's like, *why are you interrupting me?* Um, [RTH: Okay.] Y'know, there's a, there was a, it was colored by a slight annoyance and an effort to be patient and listen to this whole thing and see if I could sort it out. So I was kind of like, half of me wanted to try to understand why she was reading this and what the import of the sentence she was reading was. And the other half was like, this is an interruption.

6:41 Russ comments: Michael is confident here, but RTH is skeptical. Does Michael's confidence come from a clarified recollection of the 10:31 moment? Or does it come from a sense of reasonable consistency with what has been said so far? Russ doesn't know.

It may seem that my failure to accept what Michael is confidently saying is disrespectful or arrogant, but I think the opposite is true. I have heard what Michael is saying with as full attentiveness as I can muster, in the context of quite a lot of experience in similar situations. I've heard his confidence, but I've also heard his subjunctification and respected both; I've heard his consistency but I've also heard his contradiction and respected both. I've tried in my (imperfect) way to honor all aspects of Michael's account, and the result is that I don't know what was in his experience at the moment of this beep. Anything *other than* that would be disrespectful or arrogant.

Sooner or later we will have to have a conversation about that.

7:18 RTH: Okay.

7:19 Michael: But, y'know, it's your marriage. You're being as polite as you can [laughs].

7:23 RTH: Absolutely. Okay, then I think I'm good.

7:27 Michael: Okay. Number 2.

SAMPLE 2.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

7:30 Michael: Um, the second is, is five minutes later, 10:36. We're reading side by side on the couch. (This is a very rainy day on Wednesday.) Uh, I'm reading *To the Lighthouse* and I'm struggling to follow this page, long sentence. Um, and I find Virginia Woolf difficult to, to read. I'm reading her out of my interest in consciousness, stream of consciousness, uh, the, my book project. Um, and there's this long sentence, which I could read to you, but it, it's, I'm on the word "sop" when the beeper goes off. [RTH: S-O-P sop?] S-O-P. Uh, Mrs. Ramsey is thinking about the poor and her charity. Um, let me just read you the, what the sop is part of.

8:23 RTH: So I don't think you necessarily have to read me that. I'm, I'm more interested in what *your* experience is [Michael: Okay.] than what the book is.

8:23 Russ comments: RTH short-circuits the reading of the sentence because the sentence-reading would provide the occasion for a new during-the-interview experience of "sop," as well as allowing time to formulate a general principle about

it. RTH would prefer to go as directly as he can to the recollection of the 10:36 experience.

But this instruction is more part of the forward-looking iterative procedure (toward *next time*, so that Michael may better understand that RTH wants us to go as directly to the experience as we can) rather than the backward-looking (toward 10:36 day before yesterday) effort.

- 8:30 Michael: So I'm trying to untangle this sentence. Um, I mean, the short part of it is, uh, whose, "whose charity was half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity." I'm kind of, it's one of those, it was a very long sentence. It was like a full page. And I'm trying to untangle the syntax and it's very intricate. But I remember as when I got to the word "sop," thinking (and this is the moment), um, that it was an odd word in this context, and that the flavor of it stood out, uh, among all the longer, um, Latinate words that Woolf uses. I, I dunno if it's an Anglo-Saxon word, but it had that kind of immediacy and, y'know, brevity that I associate with Anglo-Saxon words. And I was like, *huh! That's an unusual word for Virginia Woolf.*
- 9:26 RTH: So, is your experience at the moment of the beep a reaction to the unusual word, or a comment on the unusual characteristics of it? The Anglo-Saxon by comparison to Latinate?
- 9:43 Michael: I wouldn't say I, I drew it out to that extent. I was, uh, at the *moment*, it was just like, *huh, weird word. Sop.* So, um, and that's where, that's what I was thinking. And that, y'know, it wasn't a fluid reading experience where I was conjuring the waking dream that you're supposed to have when you're reading a novel. It was just all about words. Um, and, uh, and this was one that had a certain value to it that seemed out of place. And I was just kind of wondering.
- 10:18 RTH: So the sentence, the question that I asked a minute ago, I think was a little bit more involved than I really had in mind. What I, what I really had in mind was, is this a *reaction* to a strange word? Or is this, uh, some kind of a *thinking process about* the strangeness of the word?
- 10:36 Michael: I'm not sure I get the distinction between those two options. Will you try that again?
- 10:42 RTH: Well, I could be reading along, reading along and get to sp and have some kind of a reaction to that, some, maybe about...
- 10:49 Michael: I might have kept going, if, if not for the beeper, I might have kept going, y'know? *Oh. Sop. Okay.* Um, but the fact that I knew that was the very moment. Again, this, y'know, this is retrospective. I started, I started dwelling on it more than I might have. But the nature of this experience, I mean, it was *definitely* cognitive. I'm reading. I'm very attuned to language because, precisely because in my view, she's failing to create a more fluid, visual, um, uh, experience. So I'm reading word by word, y'know, trying to parse it, makes sense of it. Um, so I'm more sensitive to the words than I might be in a writer who was more narrative, y'know, had more narrative, um, flow.

- 11:41 RTH: So I haven't articulated the question that I've got yet, I don't think. And, and my question is, is this, is this something like a re that I react to the word as a, as the, the stream of words are going by, as I'm parsing them along, I'm reacting to that word? Or am I somehow analyzing cognitively? That's a weird, that's a weird word. Even though my, I don't, I'm,
- 12:08 Michael: I'm reacting, I'm just reacting. I haven't gotten to the formulation of why did this stop me besides the beep. I mean, why was I aware that this was kind of out of character that came later? I mean, if we wanna separate that out from the thought, it was like, y'know, you have a kind of instinctual reaction. This is out of place, right? I mean, y'know, um, this is, this doesn't fit. Um, surprising word. And only later did I think, well, it's, it's, uh, a more, um, y'know, vivid Anglo-Saxon word than I expect from Virginia Woolf.
- 12:47 RTH: So I still haven't, I still haven't [laughs] articulated the question or correctly hearing, so, or
- 12:51 Michael: I haven't understood it. I'm sorry.
- 12:52 RTH: Or are there several possibilities here? So the, so the question, I'm guessing, for me, the question I've been trying to ask is: Is this merely a reaction? Or is this in the, in the foothills of the beginnings of an, an analytical process? I haven't gotten fully down there. I'm not thinking about an Anglo-Saxon versus Latinate or whatever. But, but I'm, but I'm somehow *cogitating* about the word *rather than* just reacting to the word. That's, I guess what my question is.
- 13:29 Michael: Got it. I would say, for the purpose of our exercise, I was just reacting. And that the cogitation.... One of the things the beeps do is give you an opportunity to think about the thought. Right.
- 13:45 RTH: Right. But our, our task is to try to, to...
- 13:47 Michael: Try to isolate it. Yeah.
- 13:48 RTH: ... grasp what happens just *before* you think about the thought, which is not,
- 13:52 Michael: What happens before is I just have this reaction. *Hmm. Odd.* [RTH: Okay.] It was just that *Hmm* moment. Um, and then whether I would have undergone the interrogation of that moment, if not for the beep, I don't know. [RTH: Okay.] It's hard to say. I mean, I often do stop and think about that. I'm a writer. I, I pay attention to word choices and, and think that she must have also, and what is she trying to convey? But I'm also in the thicket of this long sentence, [laughs] just trying to, um, machete my way out. [laughs]. [RTH: Okay.] So I dunno what would've taken priority, but in the moment it was just a reaction. I mean, I'm reading and, y'know, some word choices just are effortless and, uh, you don't even notice them; others you admire; this one just was odd.

14:49 RTH: Okay. And, and I think I'm good.

14:52 Michael: Okay.

14:53 RTH: Number 3.

SAMPLE 2.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

14:55 Michael: Uh, let's see. Oh yeah, this one was funny. So this one's at 11 o'clock, only 25 minutes later. I'm sitting at the kitchen table. I've gotten up from the couch. Uh, I've just closed my laptop. I forget what I was doing on it. And I'm looking out through the window in the kit, uh, that I'm seeing through. And there's a live oak tree, which has a bunch of dead leaves, and it's raining. And I'm thinking, *what am I thinking? Anything? Pretty scene. What would I say if the beeper went off now?* and then it goes off! I, I have a telepathic relation to this thing! [RTH: I guess so!] I can make it go off [laughs]...

15:35 RTH: Or, or maybe it has one or tell telepathic relationship to you. [laughs]

15:38 Michael: Yes, it could go the other way! [laughs]. Um, but, um, I was actually thinking at that moment, *what would I say if the beeper went off now?* Um, and then it did. It was a very pretty scene. It was a cozy, rainy day. I took a picture of the scene. It was, I think, a perception without a thought, except the one, *what am I thinking?* But I never came to any conclusion. I, the conclusion was this is a pure perception. This doesn't have a thought attached to it, unless a perception is a thought. And I dunno, is it perception, a thought, y'know, a sensory perception?

16:22 RTH: Well, I would, I would break those things apart, but I think different people have different, different feelings about that

16:26 Michael: I tend to also. I mean, I tend to think that there's a, there's a there (and I'm, I've been sensitized to this in this process) that there are parts of the day, or parts of in experience, where I'm just taking in information. And I'm not mentally reacting to it. Obviously my mind is processing the information, but I have no comment. I have no, uh, I'd have, if I *searched* for an emotional tone to it, I could find it. But it's, it's very much, uh, y'know, the windshield is, is clear.

16:58 RTH: So at, at this, at the moment of this beep, it seems to me, I guess I've heard sort of two things. One, I'm looking out the window at the live oak. And the other is, I'm, I am asking myself, I guess, *what am I thinking? What would I say?*

17:14 Michael: And I, and I've put that question to myself many times since this exercise started. It's one of the things it does. I mean, we've talked about this makes you kind of more mindful. And I've had *many* times where I'm saying, if the beeper went off, or if I were wearing the beeper, this doesn't, isn't always when I'm wearing it. It's anytime. *What am I thinking right now?* Um, so I've been, so that's been, it's no accident that that happened. I've had that thought a lot of times.

17:40 RTH: Okay. And how does that...? And, and I'm, and I'm gathering that that thought is present *just before* the beep occurs, so that thought is *caught in flight* by the beep.

17:51 Michael: Yes. [RTH: Okay.] Yeah. That, that metaphor sounds right. Caught in flight.

17:54 RTH: And how, and how is that thought present to you?

18:05 Michael: [pauses, seeming contemplating] Y'know, the words "I wonder," um, are there, um, I would say it is verbal. Y'know, *what am I thinking now? I wonder what I would, I wonder what I would say if the beeper went off now.* Um, so it's another question mark forming, like that very first one, it's a question mark in my head, but it's a different kind. Cuz I, i, it is fully formed. It's, and I would say it is verbal.

18:41 RTH: So I've heard several versions of the potential verbal-verbal-ity here, which would be something like, *what am I thinking? What would I say? I wonder what I would say. What am I thinking now?*

18:41 Russ comments: DES has a simple intention: to apprehend, at the moment that is most favorable to that apprehension (which is to say, immediately after the beep), the experience that was ongoing when beeped, and then to be prepared to describe that apprehension in an interview that occurs shortly thereafter. One of the interviewer's tasks is to monitor whether we are performing that task adequately. I'm no mind reader, and I don't have access to anything other than what Michael says, so the question is, is what Michael says at 18:05 (as well as elsewhere) consonant with what someone would say if we are performing adequately the DES task. I would answer that question *No, it seems not.*

If his experience were verbal, as he says at 18:05, and if he had clear access to that verblity at the moment of the beep, and if he could recall that experience now during the interview, then he would have said at 18:05 something like, "At the moment of the beep I was saying to myself, 'What am I thinking now?' in my own voice, inflected like a musing question"; or "At the moment of the beep I was wondering what I'm thinking, and there seems to be a hint of verblity to it but there are no words." But what he has said doesn't have such a flavor.

Why not? I don't know. I will inquire about this sample to see if we can sort it out, but I suspect that we will not be able to figure it out about this sample. So the questioning here should be understood as iterative training: I will ask about the kinds of distinctions that I think are experientially important with the intention of helping us be better *when we sample next time.*

Note that this is not an expressed or implied criticism of *Michael*. It is an acknowledgement that Michael and Russ are not at a place where Russ understands that Michael is giving what sounds to Russ like a description of recalled experience at the moment of the beep. The DES intention is, perhaps, to arrive at a time when descriptions do sound like recalled experience at the moment of the beep without being merely linguistic training in producing sounds-like-experience talk.

18:52 Michael: What I wrote down at that very moment (or right after,) is, "what would I say if the beeper went off now? And then It did." Um, so I, I do think those were the words that, uh, were in my head at that moment.

- 18:53 Russ comments: Note that that turn translates as *I can't recall my experience at the moment of the beep*. I can tell you what I wrote, but not what I recall.
Why not? Perhaps because the beep is stale. Perhaps because experience is not clear. Perhaps because his memory is not adequate. Perhaps we haven't yet refined the vocabulary to be stable across time. We can work at improving our process, and *maybe* we will get better at it.
- 19:13 RTH: And that is a well-formed sentence as is written, quote, "what would I say if the beeper went off now?", question mark unquote. I mean, that's, [Michael: Yeah.] Was that whole quoted sentence present to you?
- 19:28 Michael: I think so. More or less. I mean, there might have been some little change, but I wrote that down very quickly.
- 19:35 RTH: Okay.
- 19:35 Michael: So it was, I mean, I was remembering it.
- 19:40 RTH: And so one distinction that some people interested in inner speech would say, well, you don't really need the whole sentence. So maybe, "what would I say" would *imply* if the beeper interrupted right now, I don't have to *say* that to myself cuz I'm *talking* to myself. *I know what I mean*. So all I have to do is say, "what do I," "what would I say?"
- 19:56 Michael: Right. Yeah. No, I, I mean, you can truncate. I mean, I, self-talk is usually truncated, and there's no, often no *I* in it. But in this one, there was. I dunno why. I mean, I felt like it was a, a full sentence.
- 19:56 Russ comments: Is this complete-sentence statement a recollection of an at-11:00 full sentence? Or is this a reconstruction shaped by the during-the-interview reading of his notes? I don't know, and I think Michael cannot know. The good news is that we have now had a discussion of the distinction between full sentences and truncated sentences, using terms that are natural to Michael—I do not, for example, introduce the term *predicated* which is sometimes used in inner-speech discussions, preferring to remain with Michael's natural *truncated*. *Next week*, if an experience includes a sentence, it will be natural for Michael to notice immediately after the beep, and to recall at the time of the interview, whether a sentence (if one was ongoing at the moment of the beep) was complete or truncated. This is the heart of the iterative process.
- 20:11 RTH: Okay. And, and how does this sentence present itself to you, as opposed, for example, are you seeing it? Hearing it? Speaking it? Do you have the words there with no, no....
- 20:25 Michael: I'm, I would say I'm hearing it. I would say there's an inner voice and it's me. It's recognizable as me.

20:37 RTH: And in your voice, the way you would hear your voice if you were to play it back on a tape recorder.

20:46 Michael: Yeah, I, I think so.

20:48 RTH: As opposed to the way you would hear your voice if you were speaking it. Like, if, when, when you're talking to me, you're no doubt hearing what you're saying, or you could be [Michael: Yeah.] at least some of the time. And, uh, and that might be a different experience from hearing your voice being played back.

21:05 Michael: Yeah, it might be. Um, I mean, y'know, the, the internal voice we hear is, is a little less, um, enunciated, a little less public [laughs]. Do y'know what I mean? I mean, it's, it, you're speaking to yourself, even though all the words were there, there wasn't any volume to it. There wasn't, there wasn't any timbre to it. There was, it was just, that's, that's me thinking.

21:05 Russ comments: One could say that since 20:25, Michael has said he is hearing an inner voice, and we should accept that. But one could also say that Michael's grammar, etc., has said that he is unsure of what his experience is: at 20:25 there are two subjunctifiers—"I would say" undermines the simple declaration "there's an inner voice"; at 21:05 Michael is giving a theoretical or in-general account of internal voices, rather than (or a best along with) a description of the particular voice. Which of those two understandings is correct? I'm no mind reader, so I don't know, but it would be a disservice to Michael to ignore either aspect. So (perhaps you guessed) we will use this as an opportunity for iterative training so that *next time* we have more readily available at the moment of the beep the relevant distinctions.

21:39 RTH: And all the...

21:39 Michael: It was familiar *to me*. It might not be familiar to anyone else. I'm not sure if, if it would resemble, uh, a recording. And it doesn't resemble what we're doing right now. It's quieter than that.

21:55 RTH: So one of the distinctions that some people make is between whether it, whether you seem to be *receiving* these words or whether you seem to be *creating* these words, are you the driver of them? Or are you the receiver of them?

22:06 Michael: Yeah, and I, and I recognize that distinction. And I would say, I'm the driver in this case. This isn't a voice. Y'know, this isn't that dialogic voice you sometimes have with yourself—on the one hand / on the other hand—this is kind of just me. I'm generating this thought.

22:27 RTH: And, and many people, not everybody (and I'm, I'm not, I'm just trying to get us, make make sure we're as close to on the same page as we can get) some people would, would say, if I'm generating it, then it must be like I'm more speaking it than I'm hearing it. If I'm the creator of these words,

- 22:48 Michael: Yeah, I would say I'm more, I'm, yeah, I'm speaking it, but to myself and, um, y'know, not for public consumption. Okay.
- 22:59 RTH: So I'm speaking...
- 23:00 Michael: Like in my internal monologue, the words "I wonder" come up a lot. "I wonder if this," "I wonder if that," "I wonder if I should do that." It's, it's just kind of the way I frame what self-questions.
- 23:17 RTH: So we started out this conversation with the, with the notion that I'm *hearing my voice say*, "what would I say if the beeper went off right now?" And now we seem to sort of morph that into, I'm *saying to myself*, "what would I say if the beeper went off right now?"
- 23:38 Michael: What's the difference?
- 23:39 RTH: In one case, I'm *hearing my voice saying it*, [Michael: Oh.] and in the other case, I feel myself to be *actually saying it*. And the difference there would be sort of like a tape recorder. I could say it into a tape recorder or I could hear it coming out of a tape recorder. But maybe that doesn't matter to you or doesn't make it just,
- 23:55 Michael: I dunno. I mean, don't we do both when we say something to ourselves, we're also hearing it? I mean, it's a way, I dunno, when I write, I form a sentence in my head and play it back. How does it sound? Is it accurate? So I, I don't, I see those two things is, is very closely allied, forming a sentence in your head and then listening to it at the same time, or, y'know, nanosecond after. [RTH: So...] Is that, is that unusual?
- 24:29 RTH: ...well, what, what I would, what I would say is that the, the conversations that we're, that we're having are on the verge of impossible. They're at the, at the best, difficult, possibly impossible, and maybe impossible. So I'm not, I'm not, I'm not arguing in favor of there being a right answer. [Michael: Yeah.] I think for some people, for some people, it, it becomes, they become convinced there is a right answer to that question, and I'm *hearing it*, or I'm *speaking it* (whichever one, I don't care which, which one it is). But people un, eventually understand what that distinction is, and then they can apply that to themselves, so it seems to me.
- 25:04 Michael: Yeah.
- 25:05 RTH: But some people can't. But what I would say is that what makes it difficult are a couple of things in the conversations that we're having right now. So I'm gonna, I'm gonna critique our conversation here. [Michael: Okay.] And, and so in the course of this conversation, you have, you have, you have advanced some sort of, I would call self-theories about the way, about the way inner speaking is: y'know, very often I talk to myself and I say, "I wonder." And uh, most of the time I don't have the full sentence, but this time I did have the full sentence. And, and, uh, y'know, doesn't everybody when they're talking to themselves, hear themselves? Or, or whatever. Those, those are what I would call sort of self, [coughs] self-theories or private

theories or something about the way a thing is. And that is the, I would say, sort of the *enemy* of the process that we're engaged in here. [Michael laughs] The, the, the question is *not* whether you *typically* have full sentences or not. The question is whether *at this particular beep*; whether this is a typical beep or an atypical beep, I don't really care. The question is whether *this* was a full, full sentence. And so the object is what I call to *bracket away* all those, all those what I call presuppositions. [Michael: Right.] And it's a trick... or not a trick. It's, it's, it, it is, it requires effort and practice and, and whatever.

And, and the other thing I would say is that these beeps are a couple of days old. These beeps came from,

25:05 Russ comments: Now, some might say *finally*, we are getting to the conversation about fresh beeps. Why didn't we do that 20 minutes ago? I'm no mind-reader about my own motivations, but I will say that the iterative procedure is at its best when it takes place *on the participant's own turf*, using examples from the participant's own talk, so the conversation is not in the slightest abstract. I could have said at the outset of today, "I told you that fresh beeps were *as a general rule* a good idea." But *now* we can have a conversation *not* about a general rule but about how *in sample 3.3* stale beeps make the inner-speaking/inner hearing distinction difficult, and *in sample 3.2* stale beeps make the cognition/bodily reaction distinction difficult, and *in sample 3.1* stale beeps make whether annoyance is present difficult. That is important because the discussion is now personal-between-Michael-and-Russ, not some general thing; now it will be about how to apprehend Michael's experience with as much fidelity as possible, not about how to conform to the rules of DES.

26:33 Michael: Yeah, I was gonna say last time we did this, it was the, it was the very next day. And this time, today's Friday, and this was Wednesday.

26:41 RTH: Yeah. And I, I would, I would say that is a, that is a risk to the procedure. And

26:46 Michael: So you prefer fresh beeps.

26:48 RTH: I prefer fresh beeps. That's right. And my, my rule of thumb about that is you can sleep on the beep one time, which means that the beeps could be from yesterday and that's be alright with, with me. But from *two days* ago, I think it's, my, my experience is that, that the, the more you sleep on it, the more it's likely that you confuse a presupposition with an actual apprehension of a particular beep. [Michael nods affirmatively] And, and it's *very* common that we have to, I'm not being particularly critical of Michael here. *Look, y'know, I told you to do it in one day and Goddam it you did it two days* or whatever. This is not what that's about. This is, this is the way this process is because people, the Michaels of my world, don't grasp the, the sensitivity of the procedure. Cuz it seems like, well, I should be able to do this today cuz it's gonna be interesting. I should be able to have these interesting beeps.

And that I, I think you have to re, you have to sort of *develop* a taste for, well, there's a lot of things that might be difficult. We dunno which ones are gonna be *problematically* difficult, but let's see whether we can set aside as many of them as wish we can so that we can get as close as we can to the, to the process. [Michael:

Mm-Hmm.] And, and, and that's, that, that's basically what I spend my professional life doing is, is corralling people to try to get as close to, close to the ability to describe their experiences as they can get as, as, as we can get. And it's going be less than perfect. And it may very well for you, for Michael, not matter *a whit* whether he sleeps on it for two days or five days or, or one day. But it *might*, and it's hard to, it's hard to know that. And, uh, and so my strategy there as well, let's just try to get beeps from the day before and then we won't have to worry about *that aspect* anyway. And,

28:39 Michael: Uh, and what about the same day? Would that be even better?

28:41 RTH: I would say the closer the, the closer, the better.

28:44 Michael: Yeah. But well, maybe next time we should try the same day and may and schedule our call for a little later in the day.

28:49 RTH: And, and that's, that's fine with me. And, and so as a general rule, sometimes people will have beeps from yesterday and beeps from today when, y'know, we're meeting at whatever time we're meeting 10;30. And they did a couple of beeps from today and then a couple of beeps from last night. And, and I will generally start with the fresher beeps, cuz I like fresh, fresh beeps, but

29:07 Michael: [laughs] fresh beeps.

29:08 RTH: But

29:09 Michael: I like fresh beeps too.

29:12 RTH: But I, but I, but I specifically do not want to be understood as being *critical* here. It's a, [Michael: I understand. Yeah.] this is a, we have to develop an understanding of what, of, of how we can do as good a job as we can do for this. And that's part of the iterative, what I call the iterative procedure: that we've gotta, we've gotta work, work towards the ideal. We're gonna fall short of every step, but we can, we can get as good at it as we can.

29:40 Michael: Yeah. I'm, I'm, I'm very cognizant of the, the difficulty of answering questions like that and my theorizing, if that's what it is, is, is, is trying to explain something that seems perplexing to you, which didn't seem that perplexing to me, that I was kind of speaking and hearing it the same.

29:59 RTH: Alright. So back to beep number 3 here, which we haven't talked about at the, at the, an aspect that we haven't talked about. And may, and maybe we, we've talked enough about this beep that we've already screwed this aspect up, but I'm gonna ask it anyway. So your eyeballs are aimed outside the window, I'm gathering, and you're, you're looking at this light. I'm

30:15 Michael: Looking at the tree. I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm paying attention to whether it's still raining, because I'm hoping can get outside.

- 30:21 RTH: And the question is, how much *of that* is in your directly apprehension at the moment of the beep? And how much of that is, well, my eyeballs are aimed at it. My retina is, no, not processing it, my LGN or wherever the processing happens is taking place. But at the moment of the beep, I'm thinking, *what am I thinking right now?*
- 30:43 Michael: Well, the thought, and I mean, having the visual perception at the same time as the thought. Um, it's the, I mean, there's no tension between those two things. Um, to my mind, uh, I'm having this thought while I'm looking out there. And, um,
- 31:00 RTH: I, so I don't have any problem with that either. The question is, of the looking out there, how much of that is, are you apprehending right at the moment of the beep? Because it is *possible* that you, your eyeballs are still looking at that and your nervous system is processing it, but your center of attention is *entirely* on the question. *Or* maybe your attention is divided and half on the question and half looking out the window.
- 31:28 Michael: I would say like, I would say that I would not attending to the scene when that question crossed my mind. It was kind of the wallpaper at that point. Um, y'know, you have a fresh visual perception and it commands your attention for a little while, but the longer you look at it, the more it just kind of is, is background. So I would say that the, the tree with the dead leaves and the rain was not in the foreground of this moment. It was, it had retreated to the background, but it was present. [RTH: Okay.] And that the, the, the question, *what am I thinking?* Um, or *what would I be thinking?* which turned into, *what am I thinking?* um, was, uh, kind of occupied my attention more, but it was idle. It wasn't like, y'know, uh, *what am I thinking?* It was like, am I having any thoughts? Maybe I'm not having enough thoughts for this whole experiment! [laughs], I'm feeling, I feel sort of empty. And, and thinking about the, all those moments, I said earlier that there are a lot of moments where I don't have any thoughts, which is fine. [laughs] My wife often says, what are you thinking? And I actually will say, really nothing right now. I'm just looking around. So,
- 32:55 RTH: So it, it's entirely possible to look at the scene that you've been describing and be processing that in a non-cognitive way. And so in that case, it might be that you would say, *well, I'm looking at the rain on this particular leaf, and the way that particular drop*, that's my, my attention is on this, this leaf and that drop. That would be possible. And it, and it would all, it would be possible to say about that, about that experience, "Well, I'm looking at the at the rain on the, on the live oak." And it would also be possible to say about that experience, "Well, really at the, at that particular moment, I wasn't looking at the live oak in, in *general*. I was looking at *this particular* leaf with that particular drop on it." And those could, those would be sort of two very different experiences, or *could be* experientially very different. The, the retina might be the same, and the photons could be the same, but, but the *experience* might could be very different. Yeah.
- 33:56 Michael: For me it was a scene because I'm seeing it through a multi-pane window, right? So it's a picture. Um, I had thought a little earlier, *why are there so many dead leaves*

on that oak? But I wasn't thinking about that at the moment. Um, that, y'know, I wonder if it has sudden oak death or something like that, or, y'know, it's a very important tree in this yard, and it would be shame to lose it. I mean, all that I had already thought about. But at the moment it was like, I guess I could have answered with that. *What am I thinking?* Right now? I had been thinking about that, but I, I felt like kind of empty of thought at that moment when that question formed.

34:43 RTH: Except for the question, which...

34:44 Michael: Except for the question. Yes, I know. Which is a thought.

34:47 RTH: Which is a thought.

34:48 Michael: Yeah, I know. Um,

34:53 RTH: Which is what makes, which, which is what makes armchair introspection difficult, basically that...,

34:58 Michael: Yeah, I see that!

34:59 RTH: ...cuz that that thought, what am I thinking about right now is, is every bit of thought, but it doesn't seem like it ought to be the thought. And so then

35:06 Michael: It doesn't get at what you want to get at.

35:08 RTH: Then you're, then you're led to say, "well, I'm thinking nothing." [Michael: Yeah.] When in fact I'm thinking, *what am I thinking?*

35:14 Michael: Right?

35:16 RTH: On to number 4?

35:16 Michael: That is the catch 22 here, isn't it?

35:19 RTH: It, it is. And the, and, but, but, *but* what I would say is the beeper helps that, because the beeper, it, it is *at least* it beeper's not perfect by any means, but it's at least it, it at least identifies *from the outside* the moment to be looking at. Whereas in regular introspection, you have to think about that on your own. *Well, this is...*

35:39 Michael: And it slides! It's, it, it, it's much more elusive, I know. [RTH: Right.] Because you're either thinking the thought after you said, "what am I thinking?" Or you're thinking the thought before it. [RTH: Right.] Um, and I see that, I see that it's kind of slippery otherwise. *And* that you take up a, the introspection itself takes up a lot of bandwidth. [RTH: Right.] And you only have so much bandwidth.

36:02 RTH: And the, and the beeper helps that, or *can* help that. *May* help that. We will see whether it helps that.

36:07 Michael: Yeah. And probably more as I become less self-conscious. I'm obviously still keenly aware I'm wearing the beeper and I'm participating in this exercise, and, and, uh, I'm hoping it'll fade. I mean, it's starting to fade a little more in the background.

36:20 RTH: Number 4.

SAMPLE 2.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

36:23 Michael: So this one was at 11:15, 15 minutes later. And Judith and I are sitting in separate, she's on the couch. I'm in this comfortable chair. We're meditating. Um, this is something we do for 20 minutes every day. I'm seven minutes in. Um, and I have lost my focus on my breath, which I'm trying to maintain, and I'm worrying. I have a moment of worry. Uh, and specifically I'm worrying about my heart and thinking back to, uh, waking up during the night and feeling some palpitations. And I have a history of AFib that hasn't been a problem in a *long* time. But every now and then it pops up. Um, and I am at that moment re-experiencing, or *trying* to re-experience, the feeling, which is kind of a rushy feeling, um, a speeding up of heartbeat. And it felt, I mean, the worry is kind of cognitive, but the feeling was, um, reconstructing the sensation, feeling it *again* as memory. I didn't actually have any particular feeling, but I was, I was rerunning the experience.

And again (I, y'know, this is a lot for one moment), um, but I was rehearsing possible explanations as you do when you worry. Um, could this have been an episode of AFib or just a, uh, just one of those, y'know, a dream woke me up and my heart was racing. Um, and I didn't know. But it had kept me up for a, a while during the night. And, um, and while I was trying *not* to think about it and focus on my breath, it was coming, it was pushing its way into my awareness.

38:31 RTH: So that is a complicated explanation and possibly a complicated experience. So I would like to, I would like to tease it apart because there's a lot, there's a lot of, there's a lot of potentials there. One is that this is about worrying. Another is that it's a *recollection* of waking up. Another is that it's an attempt to recreate at least, or remember, exactly what that felt like. And another is the explanation, potential explanations. Are all those present right at the moment of the beep? Or are, is some of that context and some of that background? And part of it is central,...?

39:21 Michael: To me, worrying is, is often a replaying of something. Y'know, you're, you're worrying something, you're chewing on it, you're holding it. Um, so I'm both re-sensing the experience and wondering what it means. Is it something to worry about? Is it serious? Is it not serious? So there is both a cognitive dimension *and* a sensory dimension, because I'm not, it's not so abstract that I'm just having a worry and thinking about it diagnostically. I'm kind of trying to summon, uh, what it felt like.

40:10 RTH: And would you say you were more trying to summon what it felt like? Or more advancing potential explanations or figuring it out? More cognitive, more cognitive or more bodily reconstructive? Or doesn't that question make sense?

40:29 Michael: I don't suggest, again, and maybe here the memory issue, um, that I am re-experiencing this sensation, this rushy feeling, um, that, that was in the foreground at that, at that moment. If you extend the moment a little bit, there's the, trying to figure out what it meant possible explanations. But, but based on what I, I wrote first it was, um, re-experiencing this sense of a palpitation.

40:29 Russ comments: There is a contradiction in this paragraph (or at least the possibility of a contradiction). The paragraph starts by *not* suggesting a re-experiencing, but ends by suggesting that he was re-experiencing. I'm no mind reader; if I had to guess (which I don't) I would say that the contradiction is between a self-theory (memory is cognitive and does not involve re-experiencing) and an actual experience (I was re-experiencing this palpitation). As a general rule, in a conflict between self-theory and actual experience, self-theory usually wins, even though the aim is actual experience. That's why the bracketing of presuppositions is of central importance to DES. But I don't want to guess; I will try to help Michael tease these apart (but this will be difficult or impossible because of the stale beeps).

41:08 RTH: Okay. And, and, and I agree that might be, this is one of those things that might be easier if we, if we were closer in time to, to the occasion. But, but let's, let me ask about it *as if* we could remember. And, and so at one point you said it is re-experiencing the palpitations, and at another point you said, I'm *trying* to re-experience the palpitation. Those *could be* different kinds of things. [Michael: Yeah.] One is, one is about the attempt and the other is about the success or whatever. What you've just said when you've been consulting your notes is about the re-experiencing side rather than the trying side.

41:43 Michael: Yeah, yeah. And I, and I'd wanna rely on that, I think. Um, the trying may have pre-existed this, or, or, uh, succeeded it. Um, but what I, what I was moved to write down was that I was re-experiencing this rushy sensation. Um, but there's, but that in itself is not worry. It's a *cause* for worry. And I think, y'know, the word "worry" was very, uh, prominent in this. I *knew* I was worrying, I had enough awareness to say, not just that I was *re-experiencing* something, but I was *worrying* about it.

42:36 RTH: So, so that's what makes this job interesting, makes the, makes these conversations interesting. And that, and that is, there's, I, I think there's no question that this is a worrying moment. How much of that worry is directly apprehended, and how much is sort of the context and what's happening at the moment is just, I'm re-experiencing the rushy, the rushy thing, that we can, we could try to tease, tease that apart.

But what I.... Before we do that, what I want to, what I want to try to tease apart is the difference between *I feel a rushy* (and I'm taking this to be a chesty, rushy chesty thing? [Michael: Yeah.] Right?). So on the one hand, I feel rushy sensations in my chest. And on the other hand, I could say, well, I remember the details of my palpitations. It was a, there was a rushiness in my chest. So one of those is a recollection of the *fact* of rustiness. And the other is a *re-experiencing of* chesty rustiness. And those could be very different kinds of things.

43:50 Michael: Yeah. I'm not having the same experience. I'm having a, a, a sensory *memory* of it.

43:57 RTH: So that's what I would...

43:58 Michael: It's definitely memory. And that worrying, I mean, a lot of, a lot of worrying to me is bringing up memories. Right. Um, or, or anticipatory things. So yeah, I'm not... I'm *remembering* what it was like.

43:58 Russ comments: My presupposition-detecting antennae jangle at this turn and the previous two turns. It looks to me like Michael is presuppositionally reluctant to accept happily the distinction between *re-experiencing* a feeling (in which case I *feel* a sensation in my heart, an imaginary sensation that does not necessarily correspond to any current physiological heart occurrence) and *recalling* a feeling (in which case I remember the details of the earlier occurrence but I don't know feel any sensations). That is, at the later time, do I *feel* something (a sensation in my chest) or do I access some facts about something (a collection of cognitions). Those are, at least for many people, very different things. Michael's account of his notes suggests at least the possibility that there were imaginary sensations involved in this experience, but his later descriptions suggest that he was merely recalling the facts of the experience.

So I will have to work at making it possible for Michael to describe imaginary sensations *if they occur, without* suggesting to Michael that he *should have or did have* imaginary sensations. To convey that is (I think) high art, and Michael and the reader may judge for themselves whether I pull it off.

44:19 RTH: So the word remembering is a problematic word for me in a variety of different kinds of ways. So my, my question is: At the moment of this beep, is this more like, *I, I feel it in my chest?* It's obviously a *memory* because I'm recreating in my chest, and it's not my heart isn't palpitating now, but I, in my imagination, feel it in my chest. I can *do* that. I, I can do a lot of things in my imagination, which don't have anything to do with the reality of my body. So, for example, I can imagine seeing a castle in Spain, and my eyeballs aren't seeing the castle in Spain, but I can, I can imagine it. And I could ima... I, I think it's *possible* to, um, imaginatively recreate a feeling in my chest as if I were having a heart palpitation, and *now* my heart isn't having a palpitations, but I, my bodily receptors are recreating that experientially for me. [coughs] So I think that's possible. And I don't want,

45:17 Michael: Yeah, no, it was fairly vivid. It's not like it was abs totally abstract: I had a memory of feeling this rushy sensation. I mean, I'm evoking it for myself, I guess. So it is, I mean, I know what you mean with a visual recollection, you can summon an image in your head. I, and I *guess* you can summon a feeling in your body in the same way without exactly having it again.

45:45 RTH: That is exactly the point that I'm trying to make. And I'm not trying to say that you *do, did* [Michael: Yeah.] *did, did*. What I'm trying to say is, let's not pretend that, that we knew that we didn't [laughs]. So it's, it's,

45:59 Michael: I think I have that [laughs]

- 46:00 RTH: It's, it's, uh, (that that was one of my Virginia Woolf sentences). [they laugh] The what I, what I had in mind. What, what I had in mind is: let's be open to the possibility that the body can, that, that I can have a sensory experience in my body, even though the, my actual body isn't doing what my sensory experience tells me that it, that it can be doing. And I'm not, I don't want us to say, oh, well, Russ thinks we should be going *looking* for experiences in my body. What... *Instead*, what my art is, what I've, what, what I've heard you say is, you started out by saying something that sounded pretty much like *I experience it in my body*. That's what you wrote down when you looked at your notes there. [Michael: Yeah.] Y'know, I was re-experiencing in my body. But then when we talked about it, you made it seem like a sort of a cognitive memory: *well, I had a memory of this*. And, and so this conversation here is trying to,
- 46:49 Michael: But a memory of a sensory thing is different, I realize than the memory of other things that
- 46:54 RTH: That's right.
- 46:56 Michael: A little harder to distinguish between reality and recollected image or recollected scent or recollected.... Yeah.
- 47:07 RTH: So yes, I agree with that, but, but that's not exactly the distinction I was trying to make. I think you can, I think you can remember a heart situation, *and* you can *also*, separately, *recreate* a heart situation so that I *feel* it (it's in my imagination. My heart isn't doing it anymore), but I can still *feel* it. [Michael: Mm.] My experience is of *feeling* it, *rather than* remembering that I had it. Those, those can be two very different things. [Michael nods in seeming agreement] And I would like us to be open to the *possibility* that they *can* be two different things, and that I'm not saying that I prefer one to the other. [Michael: Yeah.] What my, what my art is (to the extent that we have call this thing that I'm doing in art) is to have heard you talk in two sort of smushed together ways, which I would like to sort out, if we...
- 48:00 Michael: Sort out. I would say the former, I mean (Hold on one second [looks down, perhaps at phone]). Um,
- 48:09 RTH: And, and I would, and I would also say about my art is that I don't care what your answer is gonna be to "I would say the former," *because* my art is iterative. Well, this conversation that we're having here is *not* trying to get at what happened on February 7th at two o'clock, 11:15, or whatever it was in the afternoon.
- 48:30 Michael: 11:15. Yeah.
- 48:31 RTH: That, that's water over the dam as far as I'm concerned. [Michael: Right.] What I'm interested in is what's gonna happen *next* time. [Michael: Yeah.] And, and so the next time we're *somewhat better* at distinguishing between a memory of a bodily event and a re and a bodily re-experience,
- 48:49 Michael: Which is also a memory of a bodily event. It's a different kind of memory, but...

- 48:49 Russ comments: This is a textbook example of the tenacity of a presupposition. RTH has made (48:31 and before) a distinction between a memory and a sensation, but Michael suggests using the term memory for both. That is, I think, the presupposition saying *there's really no difference here*.
- 48:53 RTH: A different kind of memory. And, and the problem is if we use *memory* for both of those terms, both of those things, then we get ourselves really confused. [Michael: Yeah.] So,
- 49:02 Michael: Yeah. That's really interesting. I hadn't thought about that, but there is a kind of purely cognitive memory that's registering the data. Yeah. I had this experience last night. And then there is another kind, which is much more, I mean, I used the word vivid before, and I think it's accurate in this context that is, uh, involves running the experience again, to *some* extent. You, you still know it's not really happening at that moment, but you can kind of put yourself back and, and to, to the *feeling* of it. Um, and I think that's what was going on.
- 49:02 Russ comments: My presupposition detectors say that we have done as good a job as we can in this round of making the distinction between bodily experience/sensation (imaginary or not) and cognitive memory of fact.
- 49:44 RTH: Okay.
- 49:45 Michael: And it was *accompanied* by this sense of worry. Um, and I don't know that the word "worry," I dunno where I put it in.... I guess I put it in an *emotional* range, not a *cognitive* range, but I'm not sure.
- 50:05 RTH: And setting aside the word, the word, do, is do you experience some emo (excuse me) emotion at this at the time of this beep?
- 50:17 Michael: Yeah. It's, I mean, it's the emotion of, y'know, concern. Um,
- 50:22 RTH: And how do you experience that?
- 50:23 Michael: And yeah, no, I think worry isn't, I mean, worry is... Well, worry is a complicated thing. Um, it can be purely cognitive and it can be much more emotional. I would say this was kind of emotional.
- 50:40 RTH: And is it possible to say how you experience that? Worry is a lot. Worry can be a, like a rush of thoughts. I've got 10 thoughts all at the same time, and that's what I call worry. And other, somebody else would say, I feel
- 50:55 Michael: It. It's also, remember we're in the context of a meditation where this, I, I have this sense, this normative sense. I shouldn't be thinking about this. There's another time to have those thoughts. I, I should focus on my breath, or I should release this thought and let it go. And, uh, I'm failing to do that. So there's also this sense, sensation, when you, when when you have thoughts during meditation and the

machinery of thinking is activated, or even machinery of feeling, uh, that you failed in some sense, that this isn't what you *should be* doing right now. So that there's, that, that's an overlay also.

51:34 RTH: And so that, that raises another possibility. So in the meditation, in the act of meditation, presumably I'm, (I've done a little meditation. I wouldn't call myself a practicing meditator. I've sampled with some practicing meditators.) But, but my, my understanding is that the thought arises and *then*, sometime probably a little bit later than that, then the thought, oh, I'm not supposed to be doing that. I should let that thought go arises. [Michael: Right.] And the beep could come in either one of those places, the beep could come as the thought was arising with, with, no, *I should, I should let that go*. Or it could be that it's that the, I should let that go as present.

52:16 Michael: I haven't gotten to the, I should let that go, but I may, I have enough experience as a meditator that, that whatever thoughts I'm lost in, there's a nagging sense of *you're in the wrong place*. But I hadn't yet gotten to the, y'know, you're also supposed to be very gentle about it and not like *force* the thought out, just kind of let it go. [RTH: Right.] And eventually it did go. Um, but it's a complicated moment for thought cuz there's some censorship or desire [laughs] for censorship and, um, but it's precisely worries that are very good at intruding. And this was a good one.

53:04 RTH: Okay. I think I'm ready to move on to number 5.

SAMPLE 2.5 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

53:10 Michael: Okay. Five and six are like very close together. They're a minute apart. At 11:55 um, I'm opening my phone to call my mother. Uh, my mother's 94. She's got some health problems. She, I knew she was, uh, back because of text traffic. I knew she was back from a doctor's appointment. Um, so I'm, I'm opening my phone to call her. Um, at the moment of the beep, uh, I see before I can even dial her or open the phone program, I see that there are texts on a sibling's text chain. And the thought I'm having at this moment is *better look at these texts first*. Cuz this may have some bearing on my phone call or how to handle it. Um, and there's a, uh, a feeling of, uh, again, worry, concern. I wonder what's going on. Um, I would not say that was verbalized. Um, it was all very automatic. I mean, anybody about to make a phone call seeing texts relevant to that phone call would, y'know, it was kind of a automatic program. Right. I gotta look at these texts first, um, before I dial. Um, and then, so I'm gonna do these two beeps together to start cuz or not. Um, but

54:40 RTH: Let's, let's just, let's, I would say, let's do the first one and not do the second one at all. So let's, [Michael: okay.] Let's do the first one as best we can, and, and then just skip the second one as being too, too close.

54:52 Michael: Okay.

- 54:54 RTH: So I better look at the, these texts first. Is, I didn't understand whether that was a sort of an explicit thought that you had, or whether that was sort of a skillful way of dealing with the text. I see the, I see the text and now I'm gonna go in that direction.
- 55:12 Michael: I barely had to articulate it to myself. It was just so obvious. So it, it didn't even, it didn't even need words, but it was close to language. "I better look," y'know, "better look at these." Um, so it was, it was, if it was a sentence, it was a fragment. It was just such an obvious move that it didn't bear a lot of, it went, it went by very quickly.
- 55:43 RTH: So the, the first step of the question, my question I guess is, IOs there a thought? Whether it's an important thought or a so obvious thought or whatever, don't, don't really, doesn't matter to me one way or the other about that. But the question is whether there is some kind of a, in-front-of-the-footlights-of-my-consciousness, cognitive processing, *I better look at this*. As opposed to the alter..., the alternative would be I open my phone, I see the texts, and then in a skillful way, I'm, I do what I need to do to see the texts. And there's no cognitive process at all. There is a, I need to press this button and, or I, my, my thumb presses this button, and then I, I see the text.
- 56:30 Michael: No, it was a little more cognitive than that. [RTH: Okay.] As I remember it, it was like, I'm checking myself from dialing her number saying, "look at this first." [RTH: Okay.] Um, this might be relevant.
- 56:44 RTH: So there's some cognitive processing that's before the footlights of consciousness.
- 56:49 Michael: Yeah.
- 56:50 RTH: And *then* the question becomes something like, well, are there words involved with this? [Michael: Yeah.] And I've heard several versions of, of this, "I should look." "Better look," ...
- 57:01 Michael: Yeah. I... Words were involved, but like, not like the last one, where it was, it sort of felt like there was time for a sentence to fully form. Here, it was like, I barely needed words, but they were in the vis, they were in the neighborhood. [RTH: Okay.] Um, and there was this, there was some talking to myself, "You better look," y'know, part of me was saying to the, to the part of me that just wanted to dial, stop. So there was a little bit of, uh, a pause between the, the, the Michael that was ready to press his mom's number on Favorites, and the Michael saying, "wait, better, better look at the texts." But it was, y'know, I mean, not a lot of time, but there was some time I felt, I felt two moments.
- 57:58 RTH: So is there a voice involved in these words? So there's, there's really, there's at least three possibilities here that I think we haven't yet teased apart adequately. And those three, those three possibilities are, I have a cognitive processing that doesn't really involve direct words, but if you had to put 'em in words, it would be, "hang on, I gotta look," "better, better look, some something might be happening here." If I had to put 'em into words, the words would be something like that. There's a

cognitive processing. I know what the cognitive processing means. I'm *doing* the cognitive processing, so I don't need any words. But what the processing itself is there, that's one possibility. And *another* possibility is that there are *words present*. Those words are "better look," or something like that. And then *another* possibility is that those, there are words present, like "better look," and they're present in some kind of a voice, that there are *vocal*, auditory, productive, whatever characteristics.

59:02 Michael: Yeah. I didn't, it wasn't so distinct that I heard a voice. It was, I mean, in some sense I was talking to myself, but it was such a simple and fast motion between the, the, I was just, y'know, just checking myself. Um, and, uh, I think those words were present, but I don't know. One of the things I've, I've experienced doing this is that there, there are degrees of, um, articulation of internal words. And sometimes they're very sketchy, but they're still there. It was still a, it was still a, a, a thought that was, um, verbalized, but not completely. I dunno if that makes sense, but it's, I I've had this before in other, in other beeps in, in, in the last batch that maybe the words are coming a little bit later. Maybe there's a process of refining of the thoughts that moves toward language. Um, I'm not sure, but it's, it's, y'know, barely verbal, but it's verbal.

1:00:33 RTH: So the trick of the exercise that we're, that we're engaged in here is to be *interested* in these things without imposing, uh, uh, *this is the way I think it ought to be. This is the way it must be.* This, this is, [Michael: Yeah] I'm, I'm not trying to ratify some theory that I've already got, or

1:00:58 Michael: I know you're allergic to theory.

1:00:59 RTH: Yeah! The, *and* I, and I think it, I, I think, I think it's difficult. I think we, we're in a realm where when you say "I'm talking to myself," if you'll, if one says "I'm talking to myself," then *that seems like*, well, y'know, there's gotta be words involved, cuz talking and talking is one word after another, word after another word. That's what we mean by talking. [Michael: Right.] And so when we *say out loud*, "I'm talking to myself," then it runs the *risk* of saying, well, there must've been word. Now that I've said, "I'm talking to myself," in order to be consistent with what I just said, there must be words there. So we gotta disabuse ourselves. We

1:01:40 Michael: Use it shorthand too. We can talk to ourselves in an elaborate way when it's a complicated idea. But we also just use this shorthand for every day. Like, I should put down the toilet seat after I pee. I mean, it's like, I don't run the whole sentence, but there's that reminder like this is proper behavior. And it's *somewhat* verbal, but in such an elementary way.

1:02:07 RTH: Yes. But there's a theory involved there too, which I would like us to, to dispose of or, or bracket.

1:02:13 Michael: [laughs] What's the theory there?

1:02:14 RTH: And and the theory, the, the theory is that, that when I engage in an action, even as simple as putting down the toilet seat, that there must have been some kind of a thought that's before that. And I don't think that's necessarily true. I think it's *possible* that I'm done peeing and, and I see this and I see the seat and I have a skill (my peeing skill) that involves putting down the, putting down the seat when I'm done. And there's, there is no longer a thought required. Maybe there was at one time I had to think of myself cuz I didn't use to do that. My wife nagged me and whatever. And then I, now I've learned how to do that. And *I used to*, used to have to tell myself, but *now* I've incorporated it, then I can, I just sort of automatically do it. And so *maybe* there and, and I'm, so, I'm not a mind reader. I'm not trying to say, well, I know Michael doesn't have to think about these things when he, when he pees or he *does* have to think about it. I don't know. But what I would, what I would like us to do is *not assume* that there *has* to be a thought that I have to [inaudible]

1:03:19 Michael: Yeah. And I, I know and, and often there isn't. I mean, there's lots of stuff I do automatically. I tend to need to, I'm a little absent-minded, so I remind myself of things all the time.

1:03:33 RTH: So there's a self theory...

1:03:34 Michael: Like *put this in the dishwasher*.

1:03:35 RTH: What, that's a, that's a self-theory that you're describing here, [Michael laughs]. And it may very well be true.

1:03:40 Michael: Yeah.

1:03:41 RTH: It may very well be true in some particular manner of speaking that doesn't have to do with high frequency. What we, what you just said was a was a frequency argument. [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] I engage in these kinds of things *with high frequency*. And it *could* very well be that, that you engage in those things, *not* with real, really high frequency, but with high *salience* so that you remember those things cuz you're worried about 'em or whatever. And so that's the kind of self-theory that I would like us to bracket.

1:04:15 Michael: Right.

1:04:15 RTH: Maybe I talk to myself a lot. Maybe I'm, maybe I'm absent-minded. I'm, it's not that I.... So the, the bracketing skill is not to say, well, I'm not, I, I, I, I don't ever think about this after, as I might have thought. That's *not* what I'm saying. What I'm saying is, let's not *presume* that I've got these kinds of things. Let's, let's *let the data show that*. If, if it turns out that the data shows me talking to myself and remembering to put the dishwasher dishes in the dishwasher or whatever, well then so be it. I'll, I'll find those things.

1:04:45 Michael: But we all put our thoughts in categories right. I'm trying to show you what category it felt like, to me. It was like one of those things that is on the verge of being automatic, but might need a little bit of a push from self-talk.

1:05:09 RTH: And are we talking, are we back to talking about beep 5 here, the...? [Michael: Yeah.] Okay.

1:05:14 Michael: Yeah. "Better look." I mean, that's all it was. "Better look." Um, [RTH: Okay.] And as I say, there was some aura of words [laughs], [RTH: Okay.] but I, it's not so I didn't hear it, I didn't speak it. It was just kind of like, it was almost like a sign, y'know, "Better look."

1:05:44 RTH: So the, the, the interesting thing, the art or whatever of descriptive experience sampling is at *any particular* sample, like *this* particular sample, I'm, I'm, I, I would say I don't really know what's in, what's in his experience about "better look." It's, it's somewhere in the vicinity of some words. I'm not really sure about that. Whether these words are spoken or not. Maybe it's just the concept. We're not really sure about that. But what we *have* done is we have had a *conversation* that is *possibly* going to make us better able to speak unambiguously about more or less similar phenomena later.

1:06:31 Michael: Right. Well, it's about speaking ambiguously, but it's also about an ambiguous thought. I mean, what I'm trying to convey is that it doesn't fall clearly on one side or the other of, of a kind of articulated self-talk, self-talk and something else, which is, um, close to automaticity, but not quite there. That, that, that is getting a little push from whatever voice in your head keeps, keeps you on track. Um, so,

1:06:31 Russ comments: I'm not a mind-reader, but I have been around the block a few times, and I do have antennae that keep track of a variety of things including the likelihood (as it seems to me) of presuppositions doing the talking. My presupposition-detecting antennae have been jangling for the last several minutes. There are two main issues here: if I am no mind-reader, what, if anything other than my own delusion, causes the jangling? Second, what to do about it.

First, why the jangling? Lots of reasons, but to be concrete about 1:06:31, they jangle because Michael is speaking very confidently about his beeped experience when he has no warrant (as it seems to me) to such confidence: the sample is two days old; he originally combined two separate experiences as if they were one; what he has said about "better look" has sometimes been explicit words but sometimes not quite explicit words; and so on. The only warranted conclusion that Michael can draw is that he can't be confident about this experience. Anything beyond that, I think, is a presupposition talking.

That's my story about why I think there are presuppositions in the area, but I am acutely aware that I have no warrant to be confident about either the accuracy of my presupposition detectors or my story about why they jangle. I can say that I've been honing my detectors for 50 years, that I have laid them bare on hundreds (or thousands) of occasions with hundreds of people, but (a) if I'm delusional in this regard, no amount of practice is going to change that; and (b) even if I have been right on the last 999 occasions, there is no guarantee that Michael is like the others—maybe he *does* have unalloyed access to his own experience.

So what to do? I don't really know the best answer to this, but my strategy, to the extent that I have one and know what it is, is (a) to accept that presuppositions

are mini or maxi delusions. Clinicians worth their salt know that there is nothing to be gained by trying to talk someone out of a delusion, so I won't try to do that. Instead, (b) I will try to be as forthright about the DES process as I can, including but not especially, about presuppositions. That means I can say that I *suspect* a presupposition is in the vicinity, and I can say *why* I think that (as best as that is available to me), and I can invite collaboration about all presuppositions, thine and mine, along with all other aspects of the process, and I can hope that the iterative procedure will be on the side of genuine progress.

1:07:17 RTH: So I, I, I, I have spoken about bracketing presuppositions as if it was all your, all your job: you've gonna learn how to bracket these things. [Michael laughs] But it's, it's, it's true for *me* as well. So *my* job is to, is to try to set aside what I, my, my experience is so that I can hear what Michael is trying to tell me. And, and that's, that's as ,equally as important [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] part of, part of the task. It's, it's quite possible that Michael said just *exactly* what was in his experience at the moment of the beep, and I was, y'know, and I'm spinning these theories. Well, it could be that, it could be that it could be this other thing. And, and that's all on, on *my* side. And I'm, I'm open to that as well. That's...

1:08:15 Michael: Okay. I mean, yeah. I mean, you have some categories and y'know, we've talked about before, y'know, verbal, visual, y'know, et cetera. And, um, and I'm developing them for myself in this process. [RTH: Right.] Um, and maybe I *shouldn't* think in terms of categories, but, y'know, the, the questions that now play in my head when I'm recording what happened, uh, I'm, I'm trying to anticipate the kinds of questions that you might ask about it. Y'know, is this a fully formed vision? I mean, now I'll think who's, who's talking? Am I talking to myself? Am I listening? Y'know. So yeah, I think we're both trying to learn each other's categories.

1:09:01 RTH: I I think that's, I think that's fair. What I, I, I think the art of this conversation, uh, these conversations is to not, is to not talk past each other. We, whether, whether we should say that the we're learning categories or whatever, what it's the, I gotta understand what you mean and you gotta understand what my, what I mean. [Michael: Yeah.] And, and that just takes some work.

1:09:30 Michael: Oh yeah. And these are great questions you're asking. And they're hard. And, and everything, y'know, we're also dealing with memory and what memory does to a moment. [RTH: Right.] And, uh, uh, and y'know, that may be reflected in the staleness of these beeps. [laughs]

1:09:47 RTH: Right. I think, I think probably to, probably is to some degree. [Michael: Yeah.] So shall we do it again?

1:09:52 Michael: Yeah, uh, we should. And maybe if you, if we could pick a time, like after lunch next week, one day, I would give you some really fresh beeps.

1:09:52 Russ comments: They compare calendars.

1:11:00 RTH: I will put that on the calendar and send it, send you a calendar invite and make sure we're on the same page. But

1:11:05 Michael: Thank you, Russ.

1:11:06 RTH: Thursday the 15th at four o'clock.

1:11:08 Michael: Yeah.

1:11:09 RTH: All right. Thank you very much.

1:11:10 Michael: Alright. Have a good weekend.

1:11:11 RTH: Thanks. Same to you.

1:11:12 Michael: Take care.