

Michael Pollan
Michael Interview 3

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the February 15 interview with Michael that is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/TMEiF2B_Sk4 . 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: How you doing?

0:05 Michael: I'm doing okay. Thank you. How about you?

0:08 RTH: I'm doing pretty well myself.

0:10 Michael: Good.

0:11 RTH: Sort of a busy time at the end of this week. I don't mind.

0:16 Michael: And were, was it busy there cuz of the Super Bowl...or did you not feel that?

0:21 RTH: Wasn't busy for me as far as that's concerned. It's busy because it's... we're hiring people and it's admission's time for the clinical program, which I'm sort of involved with. And...

0:32 Michael: Uh, I see.

0:34 RTH: Put all those things together and each one of 'em takes a couple of hours out of the day when you start teaching..

0:38 Michael: Yeah... Meetings. I never...when I got into academia, I didn't realize that you didn't just spend a couple hours teaching! [laughs] That was the least of it.

0:47 RTH: Could be worse.

0:49 Michael: Yes. It could be a lot worse.

0:50 RTH: I'm not really complaining.

0:52 Michael: Um, so I did a couple beeps yesterday and a couple today.

0:56 RTH: Okay. I would say, let's start with the ones from today. We're interested...

0:59 Michael: Oh Yeah. Okay. We can do that.

1:01 RTH: And this is wanna...

1:02 Michael: ...Work backwards?

1:03 RTH: Yeah. Uh, that's fine. Or, or from the beginning today and...

1:07 Michael: Whatever. All right. I'll do it from the beginning today. Um...

1:10 RTH: This is gonna be day 3 for you.

1:12 Michael: That's right.

1:15 RTH: All right. Let's do...

SAMPLE 3.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

1:16 Michael: I turned on the beeper at 9:30. At 9:51, I got the first beep. Uh, I saw a text from my sister Dana, and as I read it, it said...it, it basically said, my mother thinks I'm coming to see her in New York. And my sister's asking me if I'm staying with her or not, because she was preparing for me to be in the house. So I was...I had just gotten this text, which was upsetting, um, because it was, I took it as a sign my mom's dementia, uh, was at work cuz I don't have an immediate plan to be there. And I was in the middle when the call came, uh, when, I'm sorry, when the beeper came, I was in the middle of writing her a text explaining that information's wrong: I'm not coming till next month. But it was... but what the, the, the feeling immediately after, uh, right before the beep was of profound sadness and a certain amount of frustration.

2:11 It was, it was purely emotional. Um, and I just felt this brief flood of emotion that didn't particularly have, uh, any words attached to it, or emotion or, or, uh, or an image. Um, if I would name it, it was just kind of deep sadness, and, uh, and, uh, but colored with some frustration that, uh, she, she really doesn't get it. She misunderstood what I said. Um, now this isn't relevant, I don't think, except that I... when I wrote Dana, she wrote back and said, that was an old text. That was from when... last year. [laughs] [RTH laughs]

2:48 Michael: [continues] So it was a false alarm. But anyway, in the moment it was, uh, it was, it just, I just felt this surge of, of, uh, oh, this is so sad and she's excited for me to come and she's having her housekeeper, y'know, make the bed and get the house ready and, and I'm not coming. Um, and, and I was gonna have to tell her.

2:11 Russ comments: In the 1:16 turn, the last sentence ("right before the beep was of profound sadness and a certain amount of frustration") is a characterization of feeling. In the 2:11 turn, the second ("I just felt this brief flood of emotion that

didn't particularly have, uh, any words attached to it") and the fourth ("it was just kind of deep sadness and, uh, and, uh, but colored with some frustration") sentences are characterizations of feeling. However, the rest of both turns is context. Many (probably most) sample description start with context, so that is not problem.

3:07 RTH: Okay.

3:08 Michael: So I was happy to discover it was a false alarm.

3:12 RTH: Well, that, that, that is one of the things that about DES that I think is fairly unusual. And that is that we can catch, we can catch things that are time locked... but in the wrong time. Yeah. Without, without a beep. You would've, you would've forgotten that probably immediately or whatever.

3:29 Michael: Oh yeah. No...it was, it's true. I stuck on that. And, um, and I knew I had had a very, uh, y'know, strong feeling, feeling, uh, in the moment before the beep.

3:29 Russ comments: Michael returns us, after the aside, to a straightforward description of a feeling. Good!

3:39 RTH: So I'm gathering that at the moment of this beep in, in the, in the beeped moment (which doesn't have anything to do with last year's text or anything), but in the, [Michael: no] in the beeped moment, I am typing a reply or am I poised to type a reply? And I'm feeling sadness.

3:39 Russ comments: It probably would have been better had RTH asked directly about the more prominent experience (the feeling), rather than detour through the typing.

3:55 Michael: I'm typing a reply. Um... although I paused, y'know, when the... I paused when the beep came in, obviously to, to recollect it. So... I would say I was typing and feeling this at the same time,...

4:20 RTH: Okay. And is the...

4:21 Michael: ...and then stopped... and then stopped when the beep happened.

4:24 RTH: And is the typing in your experience, or is the typing one of those sort of automatic things and my experience...?

4:31 Michael: Yeah. I...it was pretty automatic. I mean, I was not doing it. I was doing it on my computer. Y'know, I have my, I am system on my computer, so, cuz I'm not that fast with single fingers, so I was just kind of flying through this quick text. Um, so that was there. I, I mean, I, I, I know the words that I, um... y'know, "I'm not coming till next month" is what I was, is what I was typing. Um, but that... so my, that was in the background.

- 5:01 RTH: Okay. So my, my question really is, it, it totally in the background? So I, I'm in fact typing the words. I'm not coming until next month. But, but as far as my experience right at this moment, those words are just sailing out of my fingers and I'm not experiencing them at all? Or?...
- 5:13 Michael: No, I, I'm, I, I'm, I'm experiencing them. But I don't have to, y'know, it was, um, semi-automatic, I would say.
- 5:24 RTH: And does that mean that most of my experiences on the sadness, with a little bit of frustration overlay?
- 5:31 Michael: Yeah. I would say the emotion was stronger than what I was actually doing.
- 5:36 RTH: And by stronger than, do you mean 60/40 stronger then, or 90/10 or 99/1 or
- 5:41 Michael: 70/30.
- 5:42 RTH: Mm-Hmm.
- 5:43 Michael: I would say, um...yeah, the, the, the typing was kind of trivial com, com, y'know, compared to the strength of the feeling. But I guess they were simultaneously, they had to be simultaneously.
- 5:56 RTH: They don't have to be, I think it's possible to be entirely...[Michael: Yeah], entirely. I think one can type entirely auto on auto about, in the same way that one can drive entirely in auto about [Michael: Right]. You can be totally engaged in the conversation with your passenger and weaving in and out traffic as, as is required, but not have it [Michael: Yeah] in your experience. But, but let's stick with, let's go with the feelings since they're the most prominent. So, so tell me about more about how this feeling feels.
- 6:26 Michael: Well, y'know, my mother's been in this process now for a year or so. She's 94. And, um, she's particularly confused about time, uh, which is very typical. Um...when something's gonna happen, when something did happen, uh, as well as the time of day. So, y'know, we're all kind of charting this process. And there, there are these moments where you see, or you *think* in) this case it was wrong), um, that things are getting worse and they're only gonna get more worse.
- 6:26 Russ comments: RTH had asked how the feeling feels, but Michael replies with a description of context/background.
- 6:59 Michael: [continues] And, um, uh...and it's just a, y'know, a process that, y'know, fills you with sadness. And she was a very together person. She, y'know, she, she, she was a professional, plus she ran a household. Um, uh, she never dropped any balls. And, uh, and now she does pretty regularly. Um, so, so it's part of a narrative that's in my head, y'know, that, that this is happening.

6:59 Russ comments: "It's just a, y'know, a process that, y'know, fills you with sadness" might be a description of the feeling ("fills you up"), but might be a statement about a self-theory—*when this happens it makes you feel*. The rest is context/history.

7:25 Michael: Uh, this is a, this is a big part of my reality now. And at certain moments you get these stabs of, of, uh, of, of sadness around it. Um, and, y'know, there's the sadness and then I mentioned the frustration, um, which is the, the frustration was my message had, I thought, again, this is all turns out all to be wrong. [right]. Um, I thought I had explained to her I wasn't coming till next month, and maybe I shouldn't have even brought it up. I thought she'd wanna have something to look forward to. But, y'know, given that as soon as she hears it, it's happening tomorrow. And she's, y'know, in a tizzy getting the house together. And so I felt frustrated about that, uh, also.

7:25 Russ comments: "A big part of my reality" is context. A "stab of sadness" seems to be a description of a feeling. "Frustration" seems to be feeling. The rest is context.

8:12 RTH: So, more sad or more frustration if we're just looking at the...

8:15 Michael: More sad, definitely more sad.

8:17 RTH: 60/40, 90/10, 99/1?

8:20 Michael: Uh, [laughs] say 80/20. [Okay].

8:23 RTH: And then, so the...

8:25 Michael: ...Knew I'd have to deal with it, I knew I'd have to call her. And there's another beep involving her coming up. Um, I knew I have to call her and try to explain this. And, uh...

8:25 Russ comments: This is context...

8:37 RTH: So...

8:37 Michael: Y'know, that wasn't in my, that wasn't in my life plan for this morning.

8:41 RTH: So I, I think I understand the context, but what I wanna know is whether the context, whether the context is part of your experience directly at the moment of this beep. At the moment of the beep, you know, you, you know your mother's age and how long she's been doing this and what she's been doing that, and, and you know that now. And you know that five minutes from now, and you know that two hours ago, and you know that yesterday. That's that, that that's a fact of your universe. But that doesn't mean that at the moment of this beep, it is present to you.

8:41 Russ comments: RTH's turn here has two aims: (a) to distinguish, if possible, between context and feeling in Michael's experience at 9:51 this morning; and (b) to

use this discussion iteratively to build the context/experience discrimination skill for next week's samples, so that *next week*, immediately after each beep, he might be more skilled in discriminating experience from context. Aim (a) is backward looking, aimed at past beeps. Aim (b) is forward looking, aimed at future beeps. RTH's questions, even when the aim is forward-looking (b)-type iterative, will sound like backward-looking (a)-type explorations, because the iterative method always uses past concrete instances (already apprehended samples) as the platform on which to build important discriminative abilities in the future.

Here, RTH is both backward looking (trying discover some characteristics of the 9:51 experience of sadness) and forward looking—to build the skill of discriminating experience from context (the *how* sadness [or the frustration] presents itself) from the *why* it presents itself (the putative *reasons* that sadness occurs), so that Michael will have that distinction at the ready when it really counts (that is, immediately after next week's beeps).

9:10 Michael: Well, without that context, let's say there was just a kind of screw up. Yeah. I would've dealt with it very differently. I would've said, oh, I better call mom and explain.

9:10 Russ comments: Michael responds more about context/situation, describing what leads up to the sadness, rather than the experience of the sadness itself. RTH's intention is more forward-looking (b)-type than backward-looking (a)-type, but that is indistinguishable in the questions themselves.

9:20 RTH: So, so I total, I totally agree with that. But what I'm interested in is what the feeling, I guess, of sadness is. So some people would say, when I feel sadness, it's in my heart. And other people would say it's a mental thing. And other people would say, it's neither mental nor bodily. And some people would say, it's outside my body.

9:20 Russ comments: RTH tries to focus on the experience.

9:40 Michael: Yeah, no, it was, it had a, it was strong enough that I felt it physically.

9:40 Russ comments: Michael gives a theory (plausible explanation) about how feelings are experienced (the stronger the feeling, the more physical the experience). That leads to ambiguity of the statement "I felt it physically": Is that a description of experience or the implied ramification of a theory?

9:49 RTH: In what way?

9:52 Michael: Just like, y'know, your breath...your, y'know, your, it takes your breath away. Um, so maybe I would say in my chest, I was like, big exhale, uh, here we go. Um, it was that kind of feeling.

9:52 Russ comments: This continues the statement based on a theory or plausible explanation. A descriptive statement about a particular feeling as phenomenon might be "I felt shortness of breath" or "I couldn't breathe at that moment" or "I exhaled sharply." But Michael's actual statement is about the classification of

feelings (“it was that *kind of* feeling”) rather than about the particular feeling phenomenon at 9:51 this morning.

Note also that this is Michael’s first mention (8.5 minutes into the interview) of breath sensations. The longer an interview proceeds, the more opportunity there is for false memories to arise. That is, had Michael said at 1:16 in this interview something like “I read the text and felt a surge of sadness that took my breath away,” there would be less skepticism about whether breath-phenomenon aspects occurred at the moment of the beep than if he said the exact same sentence at 9:16. Our task here is to help Michael discriminate direct experience from all else, so that *next week*, immediately after a beep occurs, he will be in a better position to notice whether physicality/breath is part of the directly apprehended phenomenon that had been ongoing when the beep occurred a second previously, while the experience may still be available in short-term memory.

10:08 RTH: And so would you say at this particular moment, I’m *recalling* that at the moment of the beep, I was sort of bodily exhaling in, in a sadness mode? Or would you say, well, I knew I was sad and it sad seems sort of reasonable to me. I should be exhaling, therefore I’m gonna tell him I’m exhaling.

10:26 Michael: No, that’s how I remembered it. I mean, I was still very sad at, y’know, at after the beep too. Um, so it didn’t, it didn’t change profoundly. The beep distracted me from the feeling I was having, I would say. Um, and, uh, because I realized, okay, not only do I have to deal with what I’m feeling, write Dana a text, but I gotta write, write my beep down [laughs]. So I had a couple, I had a couple things backed up. Um, but no, the feeling, the str- the, the strong, clear, pure feeling was definitely before the, before the beep. And it did, uh, it was strong enough that it was, it had a physical component, which I would describe as that, y’know, rapid exhalation.

11:15 RTH: And, and when you say “strong enough that it had a physical component,” does that imply that the, that i, that the sadness is not just a physical component, but there’s some, there’s something other than that, that is the sadness.

11:29 Michael: I’m not sure I understand.

11:35 RTH: So the implication of, of your *words* would be something like, well, I could feel sad, but if it wasn’t really strong sad, I wouldn’t have a physical component. So therefore...

11:44 Michael: Oh, yeah, yeah...No, I, I think they’re different degrees. I think it’s the suddenness that of this, y’know, I had had, I’ve been talking to my sister and she told me about this, it would’ve been different, but opening up a text, which is often brings news or something you have to deal with, and *seeing* this information was a, was it was very, it was very abrupt and, and therefore stronger than it would’ve been if it was just, I dunno if I had I received it another way.

11:44 Russ comments: The suddenness seems part of the theory (plausible explanation) about how feelings are experienced (the more sudden the feeling, the more physical

the experience). That leads to ambiguity of the statement “it was very abrupt”: Is that a description of experience or the implied ramification of a theory?

12:18 RTH: So the distinction that I’m trying to tease apart here is the *explanation* of the sadness and the *experience* of the sadness. And I would say explanation is something like, well, I, I open up a text, I got it from a text, and the *feeling* of the sadness would be a shortness of breath or an ex- exhale of breath or something. And I’m interested mostly in the *how* it feels rather than the *explanation* of it.

12:52 Michael: Yeah. I mean, obviously how it feels is strongly influenced by the context. And, um... uh, I mean... it’s a reaction. It’s, it’s an, there’s a, there’s a meta-narrative that it’s an instance of, right. And when something plugs into another narrative, a very upsetting narrative, you’re gonna have a strong feeling. Um, so I think that’s why it was, um, uh, it felt very strong. It was, it felt like a surge. It was a surge. Like...

11:44 Russ comments: The plugging into a meta-narrative seems part of the theory (plausible explanation) about how feelings are experienced (the more it plugs into a meta-narrative, the stronger the feeling). That leads to ambiguity of the statement “it felt like a surge”: Is that a description of experience or the implied ramification of a theory?

13:27 RTH: So the... if, if there is a distinction to be made, which maybe there is, maybe there’s not, the distinction would be, I’m, I can *describe* the phenomenon, which is a surge of, or a stab or whatever of, of sadness [Michael: Mm-Hmm] that’s somehow connected to breath. And then there is an **explanation** which would, which would say, well, it was sudden and, and, uh...

13:59 Michael: An explanation for the power of it.

14:01 RTH: Right.

14:02 Michael: Right. And there’s a general explanation for any feeling of sadness under those circumstances, which is that my mother’s in this situation.

14:14 RTH: And, and I... I’m not... I don’t want to diminish the importance of the situation of the context or the mother or whatever. What I wanted, what I would like us to *do* is to try to focus on the experience and separate out the context.

14:34 Michael: Yeah...I mean, I, well... I, y’know, I find that hard to do, um, because there’s a before and, and after. And the before obviously influences the, the experience and the after probably in influences the memory of the experience. Um, so yeah... I mean, it’s, it’s not easy to tease it apart, but I can see why you wanna do that.

14:34 Russ comments: RTH is asking for the feeling, but Michael’s comments are becoming even more explanatory. So I think Michael is exactly right when he says “I find that hard to do.” The question will eventually (perhaps several sampling days later) be, why is it that Michael finds it difficult when others do not have that difficulty?

15:01 RTH: So what I, what I, I, I wanna tease it apart if the, if it's teasing-apart-y, I guess, but it could very well be that it's *not* possible for *you* as a particular person to tease this apart. And that's what you're telling me. What you're, what you're, what you're saying to me is, well, this kind of, this context is: y'know there is no experience separate from the context, as far as I can tell.

15:30 Michael: Yeah, I guess I would say that, I mean, the same set of facts in a different context would've, y'know, it would've been a matter of confusion to be resolved. But since it's has this, this background of where my mother is in this process...um, that's informing it, definitely. Um, but I mean, I *can* isolate the experience, I mean, leaving aside the explana, I mean, the explanation is pretty obvious to me. But it, it was pretty simple. There were not a lot of words attached to it. There was no image. I didn't conjure an image of my mother. Um, y'know, I was, I was dealing with this text and there were the words, uh, the words on the, on the screen, um, and they were part of the experience. But I would say, uh, not a pro, prominent part. Y'know, as I said, I dunno, I forget what percentage, but 20 or 30%. Y'know, that I had to write...that I had to type this thing. Um, but I would say that the experience overwhelmed that.

15:30 Russ comments: Michael is smart and motivated, but there is apparently nothing to say about the experience of sadness. He can say that it's not this, and it's not that, and it is because of this, but nothing about the experience of sadness.

16:37 RTH: And then there, there's a fru, the...

16:39 Michael: Emotional experience that is...

16:40 RTH: Then there's a frustration that's involved as well. How do you experience the frustration?

16:48 Michael: Um, y'know, it's a little, uh, it's nothing I'm particularly proud of, but y'know, this is the beginning of my workday. I'm sitting down to write, uh, or edit something. And there's this feeling in addition to the profound sadness is, oh, I gotta deal with this. I gotta call her. I gotta write Dana. Y'know, it's just, I try to keep my mornings very free so I can bring that kind of clarity to my work, and as often happens, life intrudes. And so I had that frustration of like, okay, I feel really sad, but I gotta deal with this.

16:48 Russ comments: RTH asks for a description of the phenomenon of frustration. But again, Michael give an explanation / context. There is no description of the frustration itself (for example, no description of how the feeling of frustration is the same or different from the feeling of sadness).

17:26 RTH: So I, I can totally appreciate that and understand that. The, the, the question that we, I haven't yet heard the answer to ma-, and maybe there is no answer, is how does that frustration fe- feel? What, how, how do you, how does it present itself?

It's frustrated. Because it *could be* in the same situation you would *not* feel frustrated.

17:47 Michael: Yeah. Oh, definitely...Yeah...

17:50 RTH: So the question is...

17:50 Michael: ...a more generous person, uh, another time of day. I mean, yeah...definitely. It was, it was, um, it was a certain amount of irritation, y'know, here we go again, here's another situation and not at a great time.

18:07 RTH: Is that a mental thing, or a bodily thing, or neither one or both?

18:10 Michael: I think that's more of a mental thing.

18:15 RTH: Mm-Hmm.

18:15 Michael: Yeah. I didn't...I don't think I felt the frustration in my body.

18:23 RTH: So...

18:24 Michael: But I mean, it, it was, it was overlaid, or it, or, I mean, the sadness was dominant, but the, but y'know, it may be that over the course of a few seconds... the sadness, I mean, the irritation *followed* the sadness.

18:45 RTH: And at the moment of the beep, are both of them there?

18:48 Michael: Yeah, they were, they were. I mean, I remembered it as a, as an emotion containing two components.

18:56 RTH: Okay.

19:02 Michael: I dunno if irritation is an emotion. I guess it is an emotion.

19:07 RTH: Happy to call it an emotion. I thought [inaudible]

19:09 Michael: Okay. And frustration? Would you call frustration an emotion?

19:12 RTH: I would, yeah. [Michael: Okay]. Uh, so, so what I, what I would say, and I, and I, I would say some people when they say, *when I feel sad, I feel a heaviness in my heart. And I can tell you it's right here in my heart, and it's heavy. It's like, it's pushing, pushing downward and, and down downward this way. And not downward, not inward, inward that way.* And it, and it's a, y'know, they can, they can give a pretty convincing physical description. And *other* people will say, I was feeling sad (and, and, and as best I can tell, equally sad for the first person I was talking to, to), and say, *this didn't have any bodily aspect to it at all, for me, I was totally very, very sad. But it's a mental thing. I feel it* [Michael: Right] *as a mental thing.* And, and you don't seem to fit directly into either one of those categories. It seems like you're

saying, I can't really extract the context from it, I suppose maybe because this is a really sudden thing. I feel it in my chest, but I'm not really, shortness of breath, but I'm... or inhale, exhale, whatever it is of breath.

20:41 Michael: But that, that's a physical sensation. It was a, it was a physical sensation. It was a little like, y'know, y'know, your stomach falls, right? You have this sensation. But I remember it more, um, something that takes your breath away. A, a sudden emotion to me, often just as like, y'know, you, it's sharp intake or sharp exhalation of breath. Um, it doesn't, it doesn't, y'know, it, it said chest more than heart, um, to me. But...yeah, that's where I felt it. But it was *definitely* a physical sensation. It wasn't sadness without, um, that bodily element. The bodily element was definitely present.

20:41 Russ comments: This discussion is a good example of RTH's attempt at iterative training. That is, the conversation has been much more about *next week's* sampling than about Michael's experience at 9:51 this morning. The conversation may have seemed to be about trying to determine whether there was a physical sensation as part of the feeling at 9:51, but that was *not* RTH's intention, beginning perhaps five minutes into this conversation.

21:31 RTH: Ok. Then I think I'm good. And is there more that has to be said about this?

SAMPLE 3.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

21:36 Michael: I don't think so. Lemme just look at my note. No, there was some relief after, if you can imagine. Um... so I put in a call to my mother and, uh, she didn't pick up, and then she called back. And at the very moment I felt the vibration in my phone and saw her name, the beep went off. And I couldn't focus at all. So I just kind of aborted this beep. I just had no... I was, my attention was all on her. Sometimes she has trouble, y'know, using the phone and her aide has to help her, y'know, put it on speaker. So my focus... I, I just lost my focus on where I was before the beep.

22:32 RTH: So I think we oughta skip that beep then.

22:32 Russ comments: Skipping this beep does not imply that there is nothing important about it—it is likely that there is a class of experiences that are too focused or too time-pressured or too something that the beeper method, at least at this point, cannot capture.

22:34 Michael: Yeah, I threw it out.

22:35 RTH: Okay.

SAMPLE 3.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

22:36 Michael: And then I did another one, and then the last one today, Um, so I'm finally, at 11:08, finally sitting down to work. I have some pages I drafted the other day. Um, I've

heated my coffee, I've cleared the decks, and I'm *just beginning* to read the first sentence. And there's always a-, at this moment where you're reading... So I, I'll write yesterday and then I print out and edit on paper. Okay, so I'm opening up my manila folder, and there's always this sense of, uh, anticipation and trepidation on how's it, how's it gonna read... um, will I like it? And, and the beep came just at the moment I was reading the first sentence. Um, it was a little uncanny. I've had a couple uncanny beeps. Um...especially because the line I was reading was, "what was I thinking?" Question mark. What are the odds!?! Um, anyway, so I'm, I'm reading that sentence that I wrote actually a few days ago, and it's part of a kind of a funny beginning. Um, and as I'm reading that I have this, y'know, this sense of trepidation and anticipation. Um, what do I think of it? How's it gonna be? How much work is it gonna take? Does it, does it work? Y'know, all those kind of thoughts. And, and then the beep went off. So I was just settling in. I had a morning of many interruptions. [laughs].

24:28 RTH: So let's, let's presume, let's, let's try and explain what here, I guess. But let's presume that everything that you've told me is context. And so now I've got the context. I understand what's happening here. Tell me what's in your experience that is caught in flight by the beep? Just focusing on the experience, on the, on the presumption that Russ knows what the context is—you don't have to tell me any more.

24:28 Russ comments: RTH is suggesting an iterative training exercise—let's practice discriminating context from experience, focusing only on experience. (The motivation for this exercise follows from the difficulties we had in the discussion of the previous sample.)

24:52 Michael: Yeah. It's reading that sentence, those few words, which are...I am only looking at them, I am not sounding them out in any way, which is unusual for me, but I think it's because it's such...

25:07 RTH: [interrupts] That's con, context. Let's set, set aside the context, just [Michael: Okay.] experience.

25:07 Russ comments: RTH is very directive here. Is it possible to discriminate context from experience?

25:11 Michael: And as I'm looking at that sentence, at the same time, I'm in a, I have an emotional state. And the emotional state is both the forward looking anticipation (like, okay, I'm reading these pages clean, I've printed it out clean) and trepidation, nervousness... So I have, so cognitively I'm taking in a sentence, visually, uh, on a piece of paper. And emotionally I have this, this *feeling* that accompanied it. Um, it's not as neutral as perhaps it should be.

25:49 RTH: That would be context two from my point of view. What, so the... so the, are there two feelings, trepidation and anticipation? Or is that one thing?

25:56 Michael: They run together. It's one feeling.[Okay]. How did...

- 25:58 Michael: and I guess I could just say trepidation, but there's also, it's, it's, there's an admixture of something a little more, *maybe this is good*.
- 26:09 RTH: And, and so how, how, how did does that present itself to you? What, what do you feel?
- 26:18 Michael: It's a feeling tone while this moment is happening of reading. It, it, it's, it's not... I mean, the sentence is in the foreground to the extent anything's really foregrounded and the feeling tone is in the background, but it's definitely there. It would be a different experience without it.
- 26:18 Russ comments: Michael continues to describe context (explaining that reading is happening; that it would be a different experience) with only a slight amount of description of experience (it's a feeling tone in the background). An important aspect of the DES process is to discover whether the emphasis on context is a necessary part of the attempt to describe feeling, or just a verbal mannerism.

- 26:38 RTH: And, and would you say the trepidation feeling, whatever we're gonna call that is, is *powerfully* there? Or..?
- 26:49 Michael: Um, it's not, it's not like I'm ner y'know, I'm nervous. Um, it's just a kind of, a little bit of adrenaline perhaps goes with this moment.
- 26:59 RTH: So by *powerfully* what I really mean is, is does this... is the feeling, would, would, would, would you say the feeling is more in front of the footlights of your consciousness, so to speak? Or the sentence? Or is it both? Or inextricable or whatever?
- 27:16 Michael: Um... I would say the sentence to a greater extent. But the sentence is not requiring a lot of concentration. So I mean, I'm leaving the moment now, so reading other sentences that were less familiar to me, I would get absorbed in the rhythm of the sentence, the word choice, all that kind of stuff. And the trepidation-anticipation would retreat further in the background. Here, since I'm *just* beginning, I'm on the very first words, they're more present.
- 27:56 RTH: And the trepidation, I was, well, about the, about the sentence: you said that the sentence was there without being spoken or articulated in any way, but somehow...
- 28:06 Michael: Yeah. Cuz it wasn't... I mean, it wasn't in a paragraph, it was set out by itself. Um, so it was, y'know, it's short enough that you just take it in without actually having to read it. I mean, I actually do hear words when I read, but, but when they're this simple, I, y'know, it's like a sign.[RTH: Mm-Hmm] ...y'know, a road sign.
- 28:28 RTH: Okay. And, and the trepidation, is there more to say about how you experience this?
- 28:39 Michael: It's a familiar feeling. Y'know, it often goes with this moment in the morning. Um, you, y'know, uh, starting, starting out, freshly printed copy. What do you think of it? How, how, how... where, where's our day gonna go? Am I gonna spend the day editing or writing? Y'know, do I have to rip this up?
- 28:39 Russ comments: This is all context, with no description of the trepidation feeling itself. One way to understand this is: I feel trepidation. Becasue there is nothing more descriptively that can be said about the feeling, I provide context.
- 29:03 RTH: So those are all, I would say thought-y kind of things?
- 29:09 Michael: Well, they're, they're... yeah, they're the, the, the, uh, deep structure of the trepidation. I mean, it's where the trepidation is coming from.
- 29:22 RTH: I don't have any doubt about that. Uh, in the slightest. The question is what is in your experience? And the question is, are all those kinds of thoughts in your experience? Or do the, is that the source?

- 29:32 Michael: No, the trepidation is a, is a summary of all those thoughts, right? It's a... I mean, it's an algorithm. It's, it's how all those thoughts which I have whenever I sit down and write manifest in experience... in emotion.
- 29:32 Russ comments: This is self-theory, not description. The thoughts apparently are not directly apprehended, but are presumed to be present.
- 29:49 RTH: So from that, I could say I could understand that as being said, *I got like a swirl of thoughts going on here*.
- 29:55 Michael: No, I didn't at that point. I didn't have a swirl. Um, it, it had been distilled to a sense of trepidation. It's when I unpack it that I can find all that other crap.
- 30:06 RTH: Mm-Hmm. So, so basically what we're saying now, I understand, as I understand it, is: *I feel something not I'm thinking something*. [Michael: Yeah.] What I feel is something like trepidation. And I can explain where it comes from. It's just gonna be any good, what did I say? Whatever, all that stuff.
- 30:25 Michael: Yeah. But I...but there, but the two levels too, there's the reading level, too.
- 30:29 RTH: And there's the reading level...Yeah. Yeah. I didn't read mean to short circuit the reading level, but I, I was focused on the trepidation.
- 30:34 Michael: So they're, they're definitely simultaneous.
- 30:37 RTH: Okay. And, and referring just to the trepidation for the moment. The, is there a bodily aspect of this, or is this a mental thing? And by mental, I mean just *not bodily*.
- 30:37 Russ comments: RTH is still trying to discern whether there are experiential features of the at-the-moment-of-the-beep feeling. He suggests a bodily aspect on the possibility that Michael has just overlooked that aspect....
- 30:51 Michael: It's subtle, but I would say that there is, and um, it's a little bit that sense of getting some adrenaline, um, y'know, that, that there's... you're getting... you're getting enough arousal to put you in a state of, uh, alertness, of sharpness. Um, so it's pretty subtle. I mean, but I'm sure if you could measure adrenaline release, you would find some. So to the extent that adrenaline release has a feeling, um, I would say that was there. Not a big one, just one of those that makes you a little sharper than you are normally.
- 30:51 Russ comments: ...but rather that give a straightforward description of a bodily, he gives a theoretical account of it.
- 31:39 RTH: So I would, I would say: I don't have any doubt that there's adrenaline involved, but I doubt...I *do* doubt that you have any experience of adrenaline *directly*. You don't feel your adrenal glands dropping drops of adrenaline into your bloodstream somewhere. What you feel is something that might be the *result* of adrenaline, that

you would *infer* is the result of adrenaline, which is probably the result of adrenaline and six or eight other hormones that we can't, neither one of us specify.

32:08 Michael: Right, right. Yeah. And there may be dopamine too. Um...but...

32:12 RTH: So, so, so let's not say it's the result of adrenaline, because we're not really *sure* it's the result of adrenaline. It could be the result of adrenaline and a whole bunch of other stuff or *whatever*. But even if it is *exactly* the result of adrenaline, we don't *experience* the adrenaline. So what I'm trying to get us at is what the experience is.

32:32 Michael: Right. So I would just say it is a, uh, a a kind of vague feeling of arousal. I'm up, y'know, a little more up. I'm, uh, really focused. I'm not distractible, unless the phone rings or something. So it's a, it's, it's a sense of, y'know, being a little more on your toes than you normally are...even though I'm sitting down.

33:10 RTH: *So being on my toes a little bit more, a little sharper*, I would say, has a different sound to, *I feel trepidation*.

33:24 Michael: Don't forget the anticipation, that's there too. I see the anticipation as the positive side of the coin and the trepidation, the slight nervousness. But they all, y'know, but they both, um, to the extent they have a physical manifestation, I would describe it as just being a little more up, a little more sharp...Y'know, it's like you hear a noise outside the window and your, and your senses are sharpened, right? I'm...my senses are sharpened. Even though this is a mental process, I do feel a little sharper.

34:13 RTH: So the, the hard part about this exercise that we're engaged in here is that when *you* hear a sound outside the window and *I* hear a sound outside the window, that's not necessarily the same experience.

34:26 Michael: Right.

34:27 RTH: So...and, and when I feel sharper and when you feel sharper, when I, when I edit and you edit, those are not the same thing. So we can't... we, not *necessarily* the same thing. So, so we can't, you, we can't assume that because you're doing the same task that I'm doing, that I know what, what your feeling is. So the object of our exercise here is—to, to, to the extent we can do it—is to put into words the, what it feels like to be..., and the words that we've used here is *trepidation* and *up* and *alert* and...

35:08 Michael: *Anticipation*.

35:10 RTH: *Anticipation*. And so far we haven't been able to say anything more about it than that. And maybe that's as far as...

35:20 Michael: Yeah, but you... I mean, the question you asked me is, did it have a physical component? And what I'm trying to get at, and it's very hard to describe, uh, is that there *was* some physical component or there, y'know, that accompanies those, those feelings of anticipation and trepidation. That you're, you're on alert and

you're somewhat aroused. I mean, I don't mean sexually, but you're, y'know, you're mentally aroused. And you, and, and that's all to the good, given what I have to do. Y'know, I have to, I have to read this paragraph as if I'd never seen it before. [pause] I mean, maybe there's another phy- another word for the physical sensations that can accompany anticipation. Um, I'm just not... I just can't put my finger on it right now.

36:32 RTH: So when I asked, "was there a physical sensation involved," I didn't actually mean, was there a physical sensation involved, I guess. What I, because that would, that would indicate that my question was about some, something *physical*. And my question was really about *experiential*. And my, so my question was, if we could grasp your experience at the moment of the beep, as if there was a way to stick a corkscrew into you and pull it out (which there's not, so we have to talk about it), would, would that experience have included a... [corrects himself] That's not the question I wanted to ask, either. *Did* that experience, so, so as best we can, we're trying to get at the experience that was right there at the moment of the beep. And the question is, did that include a bodily component? And I don't particularly wanna know...

37:42 Michael: Is that different than physical, or are you using them synonymously?

37:48 RTH: An *experienced physical component*. So I don't really wanna know whether your body was aroused, um, whether your blood pressure was high or whether any of the other physical aspects. What I wanna know is: *at the moment of this beep, regardless of whether it's like or unlike any other kind of trepidation, anticipation, whatever, at the moment of that beep, do I experience my something bodily?* And, and the *trick*, the *task* is basically to set aside (what I call *bracket*) to set aside what seems like it ought to be reasonable. And what seems like it ought to be reasonable is, well, y'know, adrenaline goes on, and when adrenaline happens, then the blood blood does whatever it does. And, and that's gonna make me feel up. That would be sort of an interpretation or theor- theorization or something. And at the moment of the beep, all that stuff might be going on, and, and I might or might not be, it might not make its way into my general experience or my, my specific experience at that, that that particular moment.

38:58 Michael: But I felt like the experience, I mean the, the, the foreground of the experience remember is reading a sentence, the first sentence of a possible chapter. And, but it's, it's, but then there's the qual, the qualitative aspect of it. And that's what I'm getting at with the anticipation and trepidation. It's like reading that sentence on the subway, reading that sentence if someone else had written it. I mean, there, y'know, there's all these, the, the specific experience was informed (it was reading that sentence), but it was informed by certain feelings. Um, and they were very familiar to me. So they don't, they didn't have to be heavily foregrounded. I wasn't surprised by them. They always show up when, at that moment. Um, and y'know, and they usually do have, I dunno, there's a mood change that goes with that. I mean, maybe I should say that more than a bodily change, it's a mood change. But to me, mood crosses the, the, y'know, the brain body barrier. Um, it's, it's, it's a, it's, y'know, I use the word feeling tone, but you feel things in your body.

40:13 RTH: Maybe.

40:14 Michael: Yeah. I mean, you don't always, it's true. But this is one that I do feel on my body. It's a, it's a kind of excitement. It's a, it's a, it's a low, I mean, excitement's a big word for what it is, but it is a kind of excitement. Y'know, you've been working on something for hours and hours and hours, and now you're gonna like, take stock. What have we got here? And you may surprise yourself in a good way or in a bad way. There's also a certain amount of suspense.

40:44 RTH: Okay. So I think we should move on to the next beep.

40:44 Russ comments: DES is a performance art, and my evaluation of this interview so far is that it is difficult going—Michael and RTH are not communicating easily, directly with each other. This is not a criticism of Michael or of RTH, but rather a noticing of the features of the conversation: RTH has asked about experience and Michael has responded often with context, explanation, or theory. We don't know why the conversation has this cross-purpose characteristic; possibly it is because RTH has asked first about feelings and the conversation would have unfolded more easily if he had asked more directly about the reading aspect; possibly it is because Michael's trepidation/anticipation had no other features; possibly something else.

RTH suggests moving on to another sample because he thinks the water about the current sample has become too muddled for any additional clear grasp of any phenomena.

I emphasize that this is a feature of the iterative method: the difficulty here may turn out to be an idiosyncratic feature of today's samples; or it may turn out to be a characteristic of Michael's experience; or a byproduct of the DES method, or combination of these or some other things. Subsequent interviews aimed at new experiences may clarify things.

40:48 Michael: Okay.

SAMPLE 3.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

40:48 RTH: Which is gonna be from yesterday. We have w exhausted today's beeps? Okay.

40:51 Michael: Yeah. I got a couple from yesterday.

40:55 Michael: So 4:37 in the afternoon I started, I turned on the beeper. 4:45. Um, I'm in the kitchen. I'm, I have a piece of fish, a filet of steelhead that I've cut up and I'm salting. ...I *have* salted and put on a plate; this is to serve tonight. And I am at the moment of the beep heading to the refrigerator, plate in hand, when I suddenly realize pepper! I forgot the pepper, I salted and didn't pepper it. And that at the, at the, it was the beep was at the word "pepper!" And the thought was, *shit! I forgot the pepper. Should I turn around or not?* I was, there was a little like, okay, I can still, y'know, take it back to the island and y'know, grind some pepper, turn it over. Should I bother? But at that moment it was that *pepper*. And I was in motion.

42:12 RTH: And is it the word "pepper"? Or..?

42:15 Michael: Yeah, it's the word "pepper." I hear the word "pepper." It's definitely, uh...I'm not just thinking it, um, it's a, yeah, definitely the word. This was a verbal thought with a question mark.

42:32 RTH: And as part of a sentence, "should, should I get the pepper?" or something like that? Or just the word "pepper?"

42:38 Michael: Just the word "pepper."

42:40 RTH: Okay.

42:41 Michael: Um, and then the words that followed it are, "should I bother to, y'know, take it back?" "Yes, bother." Um...

42:49 RTH: But that would be after the beep.

42:50 Michael: That was after the beep. Yeah, pepper, it, it was the moment of realizing and like feeling like, uh, I blew it. Um, and I also ge, paid attention to something you've asked me before. Is it me speaking? And it was *me speaking to me*. It was definitely in my own voice, "pepper." Y'know, you schmuck, you forgot the pepper.

43:18 RTH: So my experience is, uh, of *saying* "pepper."

43:24 Michael: To myself.

43:24 RTH: To myself and my...

43:25 Michael: Internal. Nobody can hear me.

43:27 RTH: But, but saying, rather than hearing my own voice.

43:30 Michael: Yeah, it's *saying* it. Okay. I'm telling myself, you forgot the pepper. I'm not myself. [laughs] the principal self [laughs].

43:44 RTH: So...

43:44 Michael: Is, uh, yeah, I'm talking to myself as the responsible cook.

43:50 RTH: So I've heard two versions of this. One is "pepper?" with a question mark, like "pepper?" [inflects voice upward] And the other is something like "you schmuck, you forgot the pepper" without a question mark.

43:59 Michael: Yeah, you're right.

44:00 RTH: And is, so at the moment of this speak, is there a question mark or a criticism or whatever?

44:08 Michael: No, I guess it's just *pepper exclamation point*. I think that the immediate thought, should I bother was the question mark, should I do something about it? It wasn't, did I forget the pepper? It was "*Pepper!*" Should I bother?

44:08 Russ comments: In the previous samples today, we have had difficulty describing experience, difficulty discriminating experience from context. The present sample has less difficulty: the experience is of innerly speaking "*Pepper!*" not innerly hearing it. I have some concern because Michael originally [42:15] said, quite declaratively, that it was pepper with a question mark, but now it is said to be pepper with an exclamation point, and unambiguous experiential apprehensions typically do not make such a contradiction.

So it would seem that Michael has a relatively easy time describing experience when experience is directly apprehendable.

44:23 RTH: So I'm...

44:24 Michael: But the bother came after the beep.

44:26 RTH: So at the moment of the beep, I am saying to myself, "pepper" as part of a realization that I haven't peppered it.

44:32 Michael: Right.

44:35 RTH: But the experience is more about the speaking of it than it is about the realization. Like maybe the realization just happened or something like that. Is that right?

44:43 Michael: I, they, they felt simultaneous. "*Pepper!*" [hits his forehead with his open hand]

44:48 Michael: Um, I, y'know, it's like I knew I forgot something, y'know? Um...

44:56 RTH: And, and I'm moving towards the refrigerator. And is that in my experience or is that just on autopilot.

45:04 Michael: Yeah, no, that's in my experience. And, and the, and the issue there is do I keep going to the refrigerator or come back to the island? If I'm gonna, if I'm gonna go ahead and pepper it, which is gonna take some trouble, um, I, I'm gonna go back. Otherwise I'm gonna say screw it. And uh, y'know, so I'm, I'm kind of like to be or not to be: to pepper or not to pepper.

45:30 RTH: So the question there is, is first, is that at the moment of the beep? And second, is it in your direct experience? Because your body can be deciding whether to go back either in your experience or not. So it could be that your experience is just "*pepper,*" and it could be that your experience is, should I go back expressed bodily or something?

- 45:56 Michael: Yeah, I dunno. I mean, it's the kind of decision you're right, that your body could make. Y'know we're going back, um, or screw it, we're going in the fridge. I felt like I was very poised on a, on kind of a knife edge that I, I wasn't, I very quickly leaned toward going back. But I think at the moment of the beep, I don't think I had...it was much more the moment of realization rather than the moment of decision.
- 46:23 RTH: So the bodily portion: does that mean the bodily portion is, is not yet in your experience? That in my experience, no, no, no.
- 46:30 Michael: I'm bodily, I'm, I'm in motion. I'm still leaning in the direction of the fridge, I would say. I haven't, I haven't changed direction yet,
- 46:38 RTH: But I, I accept that. But the, but that doesn't necessarily mean that's part of your *experience*. You, the body could be, oh...
- 46:46 Michael: No, where I was was definitely part of my experience. I mean, I knew exactly where I was at the moment, that pepper. Um, I, this was, this was the rare beep where I really could freeze it. Um, cuz I was in motion, it beeped and I was, y'know, and I, I just had had this "pepper" realization.
- 46:46 Russ comments: There is no question that Michael's body is in motion, nor that that motion is being skillfully accomplished, nor that that motion in some way is consonant with or consistent with the realization that Michael has forgotten the pepper. The question is whether the bodily motion is directly apprehended. It is not necessary that any aspect of the bodily motion be directly apprehended—Michael's experience at that moment may be entirely occupied by innerly saying "Pepper!" and the motion at that moment is on autopilot, so to speak. This is another instance of the experience/context distinction that has been difficult in previous beeps.
- 47:09 RTH: So...*I am in motion* and, and I, and the, and *that motion is directly before the footlights of my consciousness* seemed to, to me like at least possibly two different things in this...
- 47:33 Michael: I wouldn't say the motion was the, the main thing. It was the word pepper was the main thing. I thought pepper. And then there was the setting for it, which was, y'know, on the way to the fridge.
- 47:43 RTH: And by the main thing, do you mean like, as far as this moment is concerned, basically...?
- 47:49 Michael: This moment was dominated by the word "pepper."
- 47:52 RTH: And does *dominated* mean 51/49? Or 99/1?
- 47:56 Michael: No, I would say compared to what the, where I was in space, and that awareness?

- 48:01 RTH: Compared to any other possible awareness at that, that *is* in your experience at this particular moment?
- 48:07 Michael: Yeah, I would say 60 or 70% is pepper. And then the other is like catching myself in a, in a, in a place in space.
- 48:20 RTH: And *a place in space* can be experientially a kind of could refer to a variety of different kinds of things. I'm this far from the refrigerator; I am taking my right foot ahead of my left foot; I am holding the fish this way. All that stuff could be said to be a place in space. Or all of them together could be understood as a place in space. Or all of them could be understand, or some of them could be understood to be context. Obviously I know where I'm going. I'm going to the refrigerator. That's, I I am... it's not...there's no surprise to me what I'm doing here. I'm doing it. The question is whether it's directly apprehended.
- 49:05 Michael: I think it's part of the experience. I think it's the, it's the physical part of the experience.
- 49:10 RTH: The whole, the whole thing? Right foot, left foot, left hand, right hand.
- 49:14 Michael: Yeah. I don't, I don't remember those details. I know I had a plate that had the fish on it and it was probably my left hand. Um, and I was, y'know, halfway to the fridge or actually a little less than that. I was like, I had left the island and it was had begun on the journey to the fridge, which is all of three steps, four steps. Um, but body and space was definitely part of the experience. And where, and y'know, and I was *on the way* when I said "pepper!" or heard myself say "pepper" or said to myself, "pepper." I'm a little confused about the roles when you speak to yourself.
- 49:14 Russ comments: DES would like to be clear about the distinction between physical actuality (I was two steps from the refrigerator holding the fish in my left hand) and experiential apprehension (what if any of that is present before the footlights of consciousness?). If I were to guess, I'd say that the physicality was *not* experientially present—that's what leads Michael to say "*probably* my left hand" and "I don't remember those details." But DES is not about guessing; what I want to do is to help Michael, on future sampling days, to distinguish between experience and context and thence to describe experience, *if that is possible for him*. But I *don't* want him to learn that to satisfy me he has to talk in some particular way. So the iterative training has to proceed gently, without force.
- 50:07 RTH: Well, and a little bit ago, I, I took you to be fairly confident saying this was more like I'm *speaking* pepper than yes, but I'm hearing a *recording* of myself saying pepper.
- 50:17 Michael: Well that's a good way to put it. I mean, I'm speaking to myself, but I felt like I wasn't hearing myself. I was speaking to myself. I was like "pepper." I was telling the careless part of myself that I had fucked up.
- 50:41 RTH: So that, that might be a good, a good way to unpack some of the difficulties that we're having here. So I'm understanding that at least of the, of the worded aspect,

that the experience is of saying “pepper!” with an exclamation point, it’s not “pepper?” with a question mark. Then... and that is somehow directly apprehended at the moment of the beep. And you *could say* in a sort of a *context* way, I think, that the inflection, the particular explanation, the particular exclamation mark here is a, *you fucked up* exclamation mark, but I’m not directly experiencing myself as thinking *you fucked up* or, or whatever. I’m at the moment of the beep, it’s “pepper!” with the connotation of *you fucked up; should I do something about that?* or whatever. And...

51:40 Michael: So that came after, I mean, should I do something, what should I do about it definitely was post beep.

51:46 RTH: So the distinction that I’m trying to make *here* is between this, the directly apprehended “pepper!” and the context, which (no question about it) shapes the directly apprehended, the *you fucked up* portion, no... recognition of no pepper, all that stuff. But the, but, but that stuff is in the, in the driving of it or the context of it or the whatever. The *experience* of it is “pepper!” seems to me. [Michael: Yeah.] And that’s sort of the distinction that I was trying to make between the feelings of the previous day. There’s the sadness, which is no doubt driven by my 94-year-old mother in the history and all that, all that stuff. But there’s an *experience* which is the experience of sadness colored by, shaped, by informed, by, created by all that stuff in the context. And I would, and I would like us, to the extent that we can, keep the context and the experience separate from each other. But I *don’t* want us to keep it more separate than it’s possible. Than it is, than it is experienced.

53:02 Michael: Yeah...Because I think I, I, I think often, I mean, I know I’m providing lots of context, but I think that often there is, um, it’s, it’s inextricable.

53:15 RTH: And that was sort of the impression that I got about the feeling aspect. That the context and the feeling were sort of inextricable. In the, in the pepper beep...

53:28 Michael: Much simpler...

53:28 RTH: ..it seemed like the, it was, that was an easier discrimination. The the direct...

53:33 Michael: It was, yes. In a lot of ways. Also, I have a lot of trouble often sorting out the relationship between the word and the thought. And I have, I mean, I have some other beeps here, I think where, um, it’s kind of almost pre-verbal, on its way to becoming verbal. But *not* in this case. “Pepper!” was like a, a clear-cut case. *Definitely* a word. *Definitely* me speaking it. To myself. Um, I wish they were all that simple.

54:08 RTH: Well, the... so, so setting us aside whether we wish they were all that simple, what I, what I would say is that, that the, what, what this does is it gives us, uh, the opportunity going forwards to be able to say, *well, this one was just as clear as the pepper beep*. Or...[Right]. [laughs] not as clear as the pepper beep.

54:28 Michael: We set the bar.

54:29 RTH: Or whatever it, it's a, what we could call an sort of an ipsative scale here. We, we, [Michael: Mm-Hmm] we're defining for each other what we mean when we say something is pretty much directly perfectly clear. Like "pepper!" I was saying "pepper," there was not much question *about that*. I could tell you about the context that, but that was context. My *experience* at this particular moment was "pepper." Then we've got the sort of the bodily aspect. And the bodily aspect, I haven't yet figured out *for sure* whether that's context or direct apprehension. But *my take* so far, I don't, (and whether this is true or not, you can tell me) is that the bodily aspect was not as clearly experiential as "pepper" was. But maybe not entirely just...

55:17 Michael: Yeah, because it was a routine movement. Um, also had, had I not already left the island where I was doing this work, it would've been a less, i, I don't wanna overstate this, but a less serious fuck up. Cuz I'd still be in the midst of it. But I had finished that stage. I was moving into the next stage, and that's when I got, that's when I caught myself. So I do feel that there's some, we have to give some credit to the, to the movement. And where I was in space. Y'know, uh, I had, I'd finished one step, I was onto the next step. Now, now I had to go back to the first step. Had I still been on the first step, I might've said "pepper," but I would've said it in a very different way.

56:04 RTH: So I...

56:04 Michael: Pepper, don't forget the pepper.

56:06 RTH: So I totally, I totally agree with that. If the beep had come one second earlier, you would've said "pepper." [inflected mildly] And if the beep had come one second later, you would've said "pepper?" [inflected with a question mark] And if the beep had come [inaudible] "pepper!"

56:17 Michael: Or should I bother? Yes. Yeah, no, that moment, yeah. It was a very specific moment in the process.

55:17 Russ comments: Note that this entire discussion is iterative training for next week's sampling. RTH is *not* trying to discern how much, if any, of Michael's experience was occupied by bodily movement—that is impossible today, because the water is too muddy and the distinction probably wasn't clear enough when it counted (that is, at the moment of the beep).

So while it may appear that RTH's questions are looking backwards toward 4:45 yesterday afternoon, the aim is really looking forward to upcoming sampling.

56:24 RTH: Okay. So I'm, I'm totally in accept. I totally accept that the context informs, shapes, determines, whatever the experience. But the, the question, the question about this half of this experience, this portion of experience, the bodily movement, I'm, I'm accepting that the bodily movement would be different at each step and different for different reasons at each step how much fuck up it is that, y'know, increases with each step or whatever. [Michael: Mm-Hmm]. That, that, that changes, but

that's all *context* changes. At the moment of the beep, maybe that context is present to me, maybe it's just I'm, I'm heading towards the refrigerator.

57:11 Michael: Well that, but that is part of the experience. I mean, I'm walking, um, I'm not sitting at my desk, I'm not running, I'm, uh, so it may not be part of the feeling or it may be the context for the feeling, but it is part of the experience, it seems to me. It's, it's my body's part of the experience.

57:11 Russ comments: Bracketing away the context is difficult.

57:35 RTH: So your left hand is resting on the armrest there, and it has been all the way along. And now that I'm calling your attention to it, you could say, well, I can experience that directly. There's pressure on my ulnar, ulna, whatever.

57:46 Michael: Right.

57:47 RTH: But I'm guessing that you haven't, that hasn't not been part of your direct experience for the last five minutes.

57:54 Michael: No, I'd have to... yeah. I'd have to interrogate it to, to bring it into that awareness.

57:59 RTH: And so that's the, that's the distinction that I would be trying to make [Michael: I see.] about the, the movement. So you're, you're taking steps across the kitchen...

58:07 Michael: Yeah. They're very automatic.

58:09 RTH: And maybe they're...

58:10 Michael: Done it a million times...

58:12 RTH: Maybe they're, maybe I am aware of that. I, I I have sampled with people who, who I have become convinced quite literally all, *all the time*, know that they're where, where, where they are in space. They're just keeping track of every, of everything, before the footlights of consciousness. Those... that's rare, and it's not mentally healthy, I think, because there's other things that are more interesting than that probably for most people. But it's possible. It's, it's possible that, that you keep, you're keeping track of your physical position as you move through space....

58:12 Russ comments: Note that RTH is explicitly allowing for the possibility that bodily movement *is* directly in Michael's experience. (See the comment at 49:14.)

58:51 Michael: Yeah. That's not me.

58:51 RTH: ...before the footlights of consciousness. Or it's possible that, that's just sort of part of the automatic context.

58:59 Michael: Yeah. Well there's a way, there's a sense too in which the beep itself calls your attention to things, right? Including like, okay, where am I? Where was I when that

happened? And so you, you end up interrogating your body in a way that probably wasn't part of the original experience. I mean, do you see what I mean? I mean, it feels like the, the beep might contaminate things a little bit.

59:23 RTH: So the beep *does* contaminate things to some degree. There's no question about that. How much is a different story? And I think that does, I think that depends on person to person. I think some, some people are more, more so than others.

59:35 Michael: Yeah. I'm still distracted by it having, having the thing in my ear.

59:40 RTH: Yeah. Some people...some people pretty convincingly to me (and I'm as skeptical as they come, I think) the pretty convincingly to to, to say *the beep came my, my experience was what it, what, what it was*. There's no question in my mind, this is what was experienced at the moment of the beep. And the beep didn't change: I, I, I can grab that. And other people, the beep seems to come in and sort of screw things up as it comes in. And by the time I recognize that it's the beep, it's, it's distorted my experience.

SAMPLE 4.0 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

1:00:16 Michael: Yeah. Some of the, that sometimes happens. I, I think that, but no more than, or probably less than deliberate introspection would. I mean that I've, I've played with that, too, and that, that screws things up even more. Um, there's one more I want to get to cuz I know we're out of time.

1:00:36 RTH: Let's do it!

SAMPLE 3.5 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

1:00:36 Michael: Just cuz it's, it has a different character, [RTH: Number 5.] and it's a charac, uh, so anyway. Um, okay, I am reading, this is at 5:58. Um, and in fact it is a sentence, uh, about awareness of bo, your body in space. And my mind is wandering, it's a very dry linguistics text. Um, and my mind goes to this really uncomfortable memory.

Um, and I'm on a stage with a group of people and um (this really happened in 2008) and I'm moderating a panel at a slow food convention. Um, and I see a horseshoe of people, they're about to sit down in their chairs. They're arranging themselves on the stage. And what happened, and what really happened is someone shows up who I wasn't, I'd forgotten, was gonna be on the panel. And I wasn't prepared. I didn't have an introduction. I didn't have a *seat* for this person. Curtain hasn't gone up yet, but it's about to was, and it was, and it caused tension between us for a long time. Um, and so what I remember is the visual scene and this feeling of like, oh, no, uh...embarrassment. Um, that I'm gonna have to wing this introduction and very quickly get a stage guy to get a chair. And this person's already a little thin skinned and has been inserted into this panel for who knows what political reason. Um, but it was...

1:02:15 RTH: So let's do the same, same exercise we did last time. So now I know the context. Tell me what was in your experience at the moment of this beep.

- 1:02:15 Russ comments: Remember that an important part (probably the most important part) of this conversation is iterative training for subsequent sampling days. As he has done previously, RTH is hammering a bit on the distinction between experience and context.
- 1:02:21 Michael: It was a scene. It was a, it was a, uh, my mind is wandering and, uh, from the book and in my mind's eye, I am back on that stage. And it's an old theater. It's not like the real theater. It's very old and everything is wood. Um, and curtain hasn't come up. And I'm like, oh shit, I gotta, I gotta figure out, I gotta solve this problem.
- 1:02:21 Russ comments: Note that there is still not a clear distinction between experience and context. For example, "It was a scene" is not a description of experience; at best it is ambiguous—an unambiguous description of inner experience would start something like "At 5:58 I was seeing in my imagination...." "It was a scene" could refer to what happened in 2008 or it could refer to what he saw at 5:58 yesterday. "It's not like the real theater" is not itself a description of experience, but it does suggest that Michael has some sort of direct apprehension of inner experience as well as access to the distinction between apprehended experience and factual memory—what was innerly apprehended at 5:58 yesterday is apparently *different* from what is remembered to actually exist in 2008. This distinction between directly apprehended yesterday and recalled historical context from 2008 may be able to provide us some important practice in distinguishing between the experience and context that might be useful for future sampling.
- 1:02:48 RTH: And so, um, is this and is my experience visual?
- 1:02:53 Michael: Primarily visual with, um, y'know, a, an emotion of, um, I guess I'd say embarrassment. It, it's, it, it's, it's, it was it's emotion. It's a, it's a memory that when I think back on it, I still get a shiver of shame. [Okay. Okay.] Um, and, and I, and, and I felt that in the moment. But it was when the beeper went off, I was immersed in this little daydream of this, of this situation, and nobody spoke. I heard nothing.
- 1:03:31 RTH: And as far as your experience at the moment of the beep, would you say more visual or more?...
- 1:03:36 Michael: More visual?
- 1:03:38 RTH: So tell me what you *saw* at the moment of the beep. Don't tell me *a thing* about what was actually there. I want to know at the moment of the beep, what did you see?
- 1:03:38 Russ comments: This is a restatement of the (hammering on to) experience/context practice begun in 1:02:15.
- 1:03:47 Michael: It's a stage...

1:03:48 RTH: [interrupts] I don't wanna know about the stage. I wanna know about what you saw. "I saw a stage...", if that's what you saw.

1:03:48 Russ comments: RTH's interruption is very directive: he wants to focus as clearly as possible, with as few distractions as possible, on the discrimination of context from experience. (See the similar comment at 25:07.)

1:03:55 Michael: Yeah. [RTH: Okay.] Well, I'm, I'm seeing, I'm *on* a stage, so I'm not seeing a stage from, I'm *on* it. And there's like, I'm at one end closer to the, where you come onto the stage and there's a horseshoe of chairs that have been set up and there are people milling around. And I don't recognize any faces except the, one of the, the guy who I forgot was gonna be there. Um, and, uh, nobody's quite... Y'know, it's like musical chairs though. If they sit down, there's gonna be a chair missing. So that's what I'm seeing. It's people milling around and chairs on a, on a wooden platform.

1:03:55 Russ comments: This sounds pretty much like description. There is one context sentence ("Y'know, it's like musical chairs though. If they sit down, there's gonna be a chair missing."), but Michael seems to bring himself quickly back to describing the inner seeing ("So that's what I'm seeing. It's people milling around and chairs on a, on a wooden platform.") Good!

1:04:35 RTH: Okay, and, and at the moment of the beep, do I see this, the, the odd guy, the odd, odd-man-out guy, or do I see just a bunch of people and I happen to know one of 'em is the odd guy. So, so my question is: do I see people milling around in front of chairs? Or do I see a group of people *and this guy*—including this guy—milling around in front of chairs?

1:04:57 Michael: Yeah, I don't remember that I saw him directly or, or, or made out any faces at this moment, but I knew he was there. Um...

1:04:57 Russ comments: That seems to be Michael consulting his memory of his experience. Good!

1:05:07 RTH: And, and do I make, do, do I see this scene clearly? Clearly it was clear when that, when it happened at that moment.

1:05:14 Michael: It was a very vivid daydream. Yeah. It was very vivid in the way only things that really embarrass you come back with a...

1:05:22 RTH: [interrupts] In color?

1:05:22 Russ comments: Note that RTH interrupts the self-theory (the presumed connection between vividness and embarrassment) and returns him to a description of the 5:58 experience. He is trying to capitalize on the opportunity to make as clear a distinction as possible between directly apprehended experience and all else. (See the similar comment at 1:03:48.)

1:05:24 Michael: Um, there was very little color, I would say there was color; it was all woodiness. Um...

1:05:32 RTH: Accurate color, but not very *colorful*?

1:05:32 Russ comments: RTH misspeaks here: he should have said “Apprehended color,” not “accurate color.”

1:05:34 Michael: Yeah, I would say that, or kind of monotone-ish, but definitely color.

1:05:38 RTH: And motion? Are these people moving? In the real world they would be moving, but I wanna know, in your *experience*, did you see motion at the moment of this beep?

1:05:38 Russ comments: Remember that RTH’s questions are largely iterative training. Regardless of whether Michael can confidently answer this question about *yesterday’s* sample, it will provide an example of questions about inner seeing should an inner-seeing instance arise *next week*.

1:05:51 Michael: Yeah. I think so. Yeah. I mean, not big motion. Nobody’s like coming or going or coming up to me, but there’s milling.

1:05:57 RTH: And, and do...

1:05:58 Michael: It’s not a still, it’s not a still image.

1:06:00 RTH: Okay. And is my experience more on the people, or more on the chairs or, uh, the whole scene sort of equally or...

1:06:09 Michael: It’s the whole scene. It’s bringing back this memory of being there. Um...

1:06:14 RTH: [interrupts] Yeah, but I’m talking right now, I’m trying to get us to focus just on the beep and, and forget about what hap- what actually happened. But just... [inaudible crosstalk]

1:06:21 Michael: Yeah, no, it’s a, it is, it’s a scene. It’s, it’s definitely a scene, moment in time. Um, I don’t recall any sound. Um, I haven’t thought about it in a long time and it’s, it’s also surprising me that, oh God, y’know what brought me here? Um...

1:06:46 RTH: And is that at the moment of the beep? Which would say, I’ve got two feelings at the moment of the beep: I’ve got a feeling of, of embarrassment, whatever, and a feeling of...

1:06:46 Russ comments: Remember that RTH’s questions are largely iterative training: this is about the distinction between *at the moment of the beep* and *after the beep*.

1:06:56 Michael: No, I would say the surprise was not part of the experience. I would say it came after the beep. Okay. Thinking about why am I thinking about this? I just, I just found myself in this, uh, place without, y’know, trying to be. And, um, the surprise

came later when I realized where I was. And it also took a second to put together. There is this scene. Why is this scene here? Oh, that's that time... when this happened.

1:07:25 RTH: So does that mean that at the moment of the beep, I am seeing a group of people milling around and feeling uncomfortable, but I haven't yet recognized that this was, that scene from 2008?

1:07:25 Russ comments: If RTH can land this distinction, it may go a long way to clarifying the discrimination between experience and context. Possible experience (a): At the moment of the beep I'm innerly seeing a group of panel participants milling around one too few chairs. Possible experience (b): At the moment of the beep I'm innerly seeing a group of people milling around the stage. Visually, the two alternatives are the same. Experientially, the two experiences are quite different: in (a) the visualization includes the apprehended context, including the directly apprehend embarrassment; but in (b), the visualization does not include an apprehended context—the context exists somewhere in Michael's bag of bones—he produced this visualization—but the context, including, perhaps, the embarrassment, is not (or not yet) part of the 5:58 experience.

The attempt to tease these alternatives apart is iterative training—aimed more at next week than at yesterday's 5:58. It is designed to illustrate that there is no *a priori* reason that an experience *has to be* a full re-creation of an event, that it is possible to create a visualization that in fact re-creates an actual event but which has no at-the-moment-of-the-beep experienced connection to that event.

1:07:44 Michael: That may be, I'm just not sure. I'm not sure at what moment I pieced it all together and that maybe I was answering a question of like, why are we here? And then I was like, oh, it was that. Cuz I had the, I did have the feeling, there was some feeling like this is a bad situation, um, that was attached to it. It wasn't a happy memory. But whether I, I fully understood that it was because this guy and this thing had happened. I, I'm not sure when that comes in. It might come in a little later.

1:07:44 Russ comments: Good! Remembering that RTH's questions are largely iterative training, this shows that Michael is grasping the important distinction between at the moment of the beep and after or before the beep.

1:08:19 RTH: Okay. So let's talk about the uncomfortable feeling. What, what does that feel like? I *don't* wanna know about the feeling of 2008. I wanna know the feeling of at the moment of this beep.

1:08:19 Russ comments: "I *don't* wanna know about the feeling of 2008" is RTH again hammering on the distinction between directly apprehended at the moment of the beep and recollected context.

1:08:30 Michael: Um, it was, uh, kind of like the shiver of embarrassment. Like, ooh, what am I gonna do about this?

1:08:39 RTH: And does that mean, are does that mean this is a bodily thing? I feel a *shiver* through my...

1:08:46 Michael: Yeah. Embarrassment? Yeah. I definitely feel it in my, uh...

1:08:50 RTH: [interrupts] I don't wanna know about embarrassment in general, and I don't wanna know about embarrassment in 2008. I wanna know about embarrassment at this particular beep.

1:08:50 Russ comments: This is more hammering on the distinction between directly apprehend experience at the moment of the beep and all else: the question is *not* about how *embarrassment* feels; it is about what was the *experience at the moment of the beep*, whether or not we call it *embarrassment*.

1:08:56 Michael: Okay. [laughs] At this particular moment. Um, although it happens, any time I think about this, um, there is this kind of shiver of embarrassment plus how do I worm my way out of this situation gracefully.

1:08:56 Russ comments: I take Michael's laugh as a sign that he is recognizing how hard I am working to try to distinguish experience at the moment of the beep from context. And remember that this is iterative training—RTH does not expect him to be able to differentiate these feelings for this beep—he wasn't practiced enough in such distinctions at the moment of this beep.

That said, notice that Michael does *not* answer the question about experience at the moment of the beep: he gives a (faux) generalization about what *always* happens ("any time I think of this") and a new reference to the context (worming out gracefully).

1:09:14 RTH: And is that present at the moment of this beep?

1:09:18 Michael: [The] I think so. I think so.

1:09:22 RTH: And so what that would say was, even though I might not be sure about what this situation was, cuz I haven't figured that out yet necessarily, I'm in a situation where I see some people and I feel embarrassment and some urge to figure out how to worm myself out of this.

1:09:41 Michael: Yeah. So I must have known there, y'know, there was some issue here exactly what the nature of the issue was. I dunno. I dunno when in the experience it was like, oh, it's all about this guy. And it *may be*, it may be that I knew that I was at that moment of realizing, y'know what, we don't have enough chairs. There he is. Y'know, I, I'm just not sure. I mean, it, it, it, uh, slops over a little bit. [pause]

Now, just for background, um, his name, this guy's name, which I won't say since we may post this, um, was in an email that I received today, that day. Um, and someone had proposed him as a moderator [laughs] for something I'm doing down the road. So anyway, that's, that is the proximate cause of that.

1:10:38 RTH: And, but I'm gathering, if I'm understanding correctly, that that email was not in your experience at the moment of this beep.

1:10:45 Michael: No, not at all. That's post hoc.

1:10:48 RTH: It's a *fact* that that was probably what triggered this memory. [Michael: Right.] Contributed to it, anyway. [Michael: Yeah.] Okay. And that would be, that, that, that's a good example of the difference between experience and context. The *context* is, I got this email a couple hours ago, the *experience* is I feel a shiver and I see a, I see a scene.

1:11:13 Michael: Yeah. I would, I would accept that distinction between the two. [RTH: Okay.] I was surprised. It was interesting to have this experience because this is the first time, I think in our, in the three days where I had a, uh, an inner experience, right, that came out of memory rather than the business of everyday life and work. Um...

1:11:39 RTH: I don't think that's true. I think it, I think it's the second one. I think you had a...

1:11:42 Michael: Oh, yeah. What was the other?

1:11:43 RTH: I think you had an experience....

1:11:47 Michael: Oh, well...

1:11:47 RTH: ...middle of the mi- middle of remembering palpitations. [Michael: Right.] in the middle of, in the, that you'd had the night before, I think.

1:11:47 Russ comments: He refers to sample 2.4.

1:11:55 Michael: Right. That's...

1:11:56 RTH: True. And we had a *discussion* at that time about the distinction between feeling something in your imagination (I feel it in my heart, even though it's not taking place in my heart. It's, I [inaudible] [Michael: Right.] there) and *remembering* as a sort of a fact, this is what my palpitations felt like.

1:12:14 Michael: Right.

1:12:15 RTH: And we discussed that and decided, I think, well, it's not, not, not really too sure because we weren't ready to deal with it. But *now* a day later, it seems like we can fairly confidently say, I felt a shiver. There was no real shiver at that moment probably. No, maybe there was, but it, there was certainly was no real scene at that moment. This is an imaginary... imaginary embarrassment. Imaginary uncomfortable...

1:12:45 Michael: Recollection of... yeah. Yeah. A re-experiencing of... Yeah.

1:12:49 RTH: An experience in my shivery.

1:12:53 Michael: Yeah. But I, I just mean like a daydream or a, or a, y'know, a, a memory *scene* of, uh, some duration and some complexity. I just, I, I thought we'd see tons of that, but we haven't yet.

1:13:14 RTH: [inaudible] in our discussions here. So I think I got, I think I got the picture here, but I guess I wanna ask one more question to make sure that I understood this. So, at, at one point in this discussion, it seemed like *maybe* it was the case that I had, I had... I was experiencing some aspects of this scene, maybe most of the aspects of the scene, without really knowing what the scene was about. Like, I, I see people, I see chairs, I feel uncomfortable, I gotta do something. And, and all of that seems somehow *disconnected from* saying, I'm recalling this scene from 2008 when I forgot to get this guy a chair.

1:13:14 Russ comments: This is iterative training—noticing that the characteristics of experience do not necessarily follow a predictable sequence. Or object will be to get experience in high fidelity *regardless of* whether it conforms to reality or our expectations about it.

1:13:55 Michael: Yeah. So, I agree. I don't think that was immediately clear to me. I was plunged into the scene before. It wasn't, y'know, you could, I could have thought this guy's name and then conjured the scene. It was the other way around. So the scene emerged in my awareness and, uh, played for a little while. Beep happens at some point in there. And, um, the emotion was in the scene. And it may be that the explanation for the emotion came *after* the beep.

1:14:36 RTH: Okay. Well, that's an interesting distinction...

1:14:39 Michael: Yeah. It's important. But...

1:14:40 RTH: ...because in, in the one case, it's, I'm seeing chairs with people milling around, and in the other case it's, I'm seeing those chairs in my imagination, but it's those chairs from 2008 when I forgot to...

1:14:55 Michael: Yeah. So I would say they're not precisely the same. Uh, the setting was, uh, changed. It was much more of an old-fashioned kind of rickety theater rather than a large modern theater. Um, so it, it wasn't exactly a memory, or it was a memory that it, something was overlaid on.

1:14:55 Russ comments: Good! Michael is making a clear distinction between experience and context, and noticing that they may be discrepant.

1:15:17 RTH: So that might be a topic for, for, for a different day. But it was, it's a, that's a, that was, that's a little, little different statement from what I was saying. What I would...because I, I think it's possible to remember a scene at, uh, understand myself as remembering the scene, even though the scene that I'm picturing is *wrong* [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] in some important or unimportant way. It still feels to me like a memory. And I'm, I'm remembering that scene.

1:15:43 Michael: Yeah. No, this didn't, it didn't exactly feel like a memory. It felt like a, um, just a kind of a weird conjured imagined scene. Um, it wasn't anchored the way a memory would be anchored.

1:15:57 RTH: Um, *that* is the distinction I was looking for. So, shall we do this again?

1:16:02 Michael: Yes, we should. Uh, I think I'm making progress. I'm getting a little better at...I'm asking, I'm asking more questions of what's happening. How do things look next week?

1:16:03 Russ comments: They compare calendars.

1:18:20 RTH: Sounds like a plan.

1:18:21 Michael: Great.

1:18:23 RTH: Alright.

1:18:24 Michael: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Um, you'll send me a calendar invite?

1:18:28 RTH: I will. Great. Be interesting.

1:18:31 Michael: All right. Have a good evening. Don't forget to pepper your fish.

1:18:33 RTH: I won't.

1:18:34 Michael: Okay. Bye-Bye..