

Michael Pollan
Michael Interview 4

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the February 22 interview with Michael that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/m9FCGL2SGjk>. 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

0:02 RTH: So you should have gotten a notice then that I'm recording...

0:05 Michael: Yep, got it.

0:06 RTH: And you're right, I did send you a document just a few minutes before, so I didn't expect that you had, had looked at it, but what, I'll tell you what's in it. So... [Michael: Okay.] So I think I have sent you a transcript with comments about Michael Day 2, maybe day 1 and 2.

0:21 Michael: Um, yeah, there's one you haven't, but...

0:24 RTH: And the one that I haven't is the third, is day 3.

0:26 Michael: Okay.

0:27 RTH: And the one that I just sent you five minutes ago is, is a work in progress about day 3. So what's in there is the, the transcript as made by Temi, not cleaned, but the Temi transcript and a draft of the comments that I'm, that I might have sent you. And, and by draft, I mean, I have these are, I, I've gone through the, I've listened to the videotape and I've made the comments that I thought I might wanna make. When I wake up tomorrow or next week, or whenever, I might have revisions about those. So I, I wouldn't quote those things, but, but you had said in response to a previous beep that, that you find the comments useful or whatever. And so I'm sending them to you, [Michael: Right] but I'm hoping that you take them, take them with the appropriate, this is a draft of grain of salt and [Michael: Okay.] I might revise and extend or whatever in the, in the same way that you would revise and extend the first draft of, of something.

1:25 Michael: Got it.

1:25 RTH: And the other, the other, so, so one is because I, you said it was interesting, and the other is that, uh, um, a big part of the method, as I see it, is sort of a transparency

thing. So I would like you to know what I'm thinking about when I'm thinking about it, and, and if we ever put these, these, uh, interviews out on the web somewhere, [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] I would like, I would like the audience, whoever is reading these things, to know that these things are contemporaneous, which means by contemporaneous, I mean, I've gotta write a comment about interview 3 before we have interview 4. [Michael: Right.] So that's why I sent an un unfinished version of it. I might clean it up some, but, but, uh...

2:11 Michael: Do you always do that?

2:14 RTH: I, I don't always make transcripts at all.[Michael: Uhhuh]. Most of the time in, in my regular life, I don't make transcripts. If I think something's heading, heading for the web, then I do make transcripts. [Michael:Got it.] And the, and the whole deal, the, the, the reason that things got out on the web at the, in the first place was sort of twofold. One is, um, people, people wanted to see what DES looked like and why I would make claims that I would, that I would make. So I put it out there. And the other is that, that it sort of came at a time when psychology was into the, the, uh, (I forget what word they used for it) registered, pre-registered studies as a way of, as a way of keeping people honest and not cherry picking data and whatever. [Michael: Right]. I, I, I think, I think there, the psychology's, pre-registration effort is a good idea. I think it's way too, way too *small* of an effort, but it's a good idea. And so the, the, when my response to that is, well, I'll put the whole thing out there with my comments out there, contemporaneously, so that nobody can come back and say, well, he's cherry picking his data. And he is, he's going back and writing comments from the standpoint of the omniscient being two years later or whatever. But, uh...

3:24 Michael: Right, right.

3:27 RTH: Uh, so I, so all of the, all of the, the, uh, commentary that's out there on my website is written before the next interview.

3:40 Michael: Got it. Okay. Good. That's good to know. It, it will be useful to me. Um, okay. Should we start?

3:48 RTH: Yes. So this is gonna be day 4.

3:51 Michael: Right. So I, I put it on yesterday and I was taking a long walk and I accumulated some beeps, and then I put it on this morning and got another six beeps. So I think I'll focus on the freshest ones.

4:07 RTH: Okay.

SAMPLE 4.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

4:08 Michael: Um, and that'll be today. Um. [pause] Okay. The first one today, uh, I'm trying to avoid giving you a lot of context, although this one is particularly gnarly. Um, during our meditation, our meditation....

- 4:30 RTH: [interrupts] So let me, let me interrupt for a minute and, and say, I don't, I don't have anything at, at all against context. [Michael: Okay.] I'm, I'm happy to have you give me context if it, if it, (and, and I would say for most people), it's convenient for them to give me a little bit of context, so, so I don't object to context. [Michael: Okay.] What, what I *do* want us to do is to keep distinctly different what is context and what is experienced?
- 4:52 Michael: Right. Okay. Um, so, uh, during our morning meditation, uh, uh, we were doing a breathing exercise. And, um, though your mind is supposed to be on your breath, my mind wandered to a particularly gnarly, uh, situation I'm having, um, with a magazine I write for, and the scientists who, who conducted a study I'm writing about. Um, I'm having trouble on both ends. Uh, the scientists are, um, taking forever to finish these refinements of this paper I need to finish my article. And my editor is, um... being kind of dilatory and, and taking a long time. And, um, anyway, it was a whole complicated situation where I convinced the scientists to lift the embargo on their article, which my editor then interpreted as a sign they think it's so, so positive that she's suspicious [laughs].
- 6:01 Anyway, um, so in the middle of the meditation, what I'm thinking about when the beep goes off is, what am I gonna tell Tony (he's one of the scientists) to force his hand to get him to get me this paper? And what am I gonna tell Deirdre (the editor). Um, at the, at the very moment I'm focused on Tony. I'm like, I don't have words yet. I kind of know that I wanna twist his arm. Um, I have this feeling of it's time to get serious about this and not be so polite. Um, I feel that way about both the scientists and the editor. Uh, so I'm, I'm, I'm mind-wandering to what sort of words could I use to be professional, vaguely threatening [laughs], um, uh, y'know, I'm strategizing. Um, but at that very moment, it was like, what could I tell Tony that will get him to move?
- 7:04 Um, and, uh, y'know, I'm, and I, these are friendly relations, obviously, um, but I'm, this has been going on for six months so I'm kind of frustrated. So there's, it was, so the, the feeling is definitely inflected by a sense of frustration, a little bit of anger. Um, and although I haven't found the words yet, I'm kind of on the precipice of framing this. Um, although I also know it's not what I should be thinking about right now [laughs]. Um, because I'm meditating (ostensibly). Um, and, uh, although I don't at that moment have that thought *return to the breath*, um, that comes soon after.
- 7:50 RTH: Mm-Hmm. So I'm gathering that this is primarily a thought-y thing, [Michael: Right.] and I'm gathering that it's primarily aimed at Tony, although the context includes Deidre in six months and, and whatever. But it's mostly about what to say to Tony. And I'm gathering that the main framework of what you're gonna say is more or less present to you—it's gotta be friendly, professional, threatening, whatever—but, but so far it hasn't yet become words. So, so far there are no words at all. Is that right?
- 7:50 Russ comments: This turn is designed to be experience-vs.-context training. On previous days we have had difficulty discriminating experience from context, and this is an attempt to make that discrimination come alive: *this* is experience; *that* is context.

- 8:34 Michael: Yeah. I mean, I mean, the, the thought in my head is, um, in a way is sort of a question. *What exactly am I gonna tell him?* I know how I feel, I know what I want to accomplish, but I'm framing it. It's almost as if I'm writing an email in my head.
- 8:51 RTH: So let me make a, let's let, let *us* make a distinction here, here between having a thought, which could be put into words like, "what am I gonna tell him"; *or* mulling over what I'm gonna tell him. Those seem like two very different kinds of things to me. One, one is the mulling and the other is the name of the mulling. What am I, what am I gonna tell him? The label of the mulling,
- 9:20 Michael: The thought is not just, *what am I gonna tell him?* It's, it's playing with some ideas.
- 9:29 RTH: It's the telling, it's the...
- 9:30 Michael: Yeah, it's the telling.
- 9:32 RTH: Pre-telling, pre telling, I guess what you call it.
- 9:33 Michael: Yeah. It's, it's pre, it's de pre-verbal. It's, it's, it's an idea that you're on the verge of forming into words. [RTH: Okay.] And there, y'know, there's like a simple version of the idea. It's like, *will you guys finished diddling with this manuscript!?*, but I can't say that. Um, so I'm trying to figure out a more tactful and strategic way to say it. [RTH: Okay.] But I wouldn't say I, I, there, I, I didn't sense actual words, y'know, or hear words. It was just sort of like, it was, it was, uh, more ethereal than that. They hadn't come yet.
- 10:18 RTH: So I'm in the realm of, you guys have been delaying six months, a long time, whatever; that stuff is somehow around, but not worded.
- 10:18 Russ comments: If I were confident that Michael was clearly discriminating experience from context, I would conclude that this experience is what DES calls *cognitive awareness*: the clearly apprehended experience of thinking but without a clearly available specific content. But, in light of the difficulties of last time, I am still unsure about how much of this conversation is description of experience and how much is a characterization of context.
- 10:31 Michael: Yeah. And...
- 10:32 RTH: What's gonna come...
- 10:32 Michael: There is an emotional overlay or a, um, y'know, which is, um, frustration.
- 10:39 RTH: Okay. And is that directly present to you in some way? I feel frustration, anger.
- 10:44 Michael: Yeah. Yeah. Definitely.
- 10:46 RTH: So what's, how does, how is that present to you?

- 10:49 Michael: It's like, ugh, it's this feeling of, uh, annoyance, irritation. Um...
- 10:58 RTH: So without trying to explain *how* it arises or *why* it arises, I'm accepting that I, I know enough about that already. The question is, is there anything that can be said? And maybe there's nothing, maybe there's nothing, but is there anything that can be said about *how I experience* this frustration and anger? And one, one perfectly acceptable way is there's nothing more to be said about that. I'm [Michael: Yeah.] frustrated, anger, and that's it. And that's it. I...
- 11:23 Michael: Well, there's a, y'know, in meditation there's a contrast that is pretty apparent to you when you're sort of in this relaxed state and you feel yourself clenching, tensing up a little. And I definitely left the meditative state to clench up over this. This is exactly what you shouldn't be thinking of when you're meditating. It's the beginning of the day and you're thinking about the most aggravating thing in your day, cuz I'm gonna have to write these emails!
- 11:23 Russ comments: I hear this as a self-theory: whenever I leave the meditative state I clench up. I have left the meditative state; therefore I *must be* clenching.
- 11:48 RTH: Not my job to grade your meditation. So, yeah.
- 11:54 Michael: Um, [laughs] so it was, so it is that breaking of a certain spell. So it's notable when that happens. There's a little sensation of warmth of, um, uh, y'know, just getting almost as if you could tell your blood pressure is rising.
- 11:54 Russ comments: Is the warmth part of a whenever-I-leave-the-meditative-state-I-feel-warmth;-therefore-I-feel-warmth *theory*? Or is it a *recollection* that at the moment of the beep I felt warmth? I don't know.
- 12:13 RTH: So that makes it seem that at the moment of the beep, I am bodily experiencing something more or less like warmth, which is at least an aspect of frustration, anger, and...
- 12:28 Michael: Yeah, that's fair.
- 12:29 RTH: And, and what I *don't* want us to do is to sort of *theorize* that, well, I'm supposed to be meditating and I'm, and I am in a situation which is frustrating, and therefore I *must have had* a bodily sensation. [Michael: Yeah.] Maybe that's a bodily sensation. Maybe there's not. I'm not trying to say there should be or there shouldn't be. I, what I *know* is, or I'm pretty sure, is that some people experience emotions have feelings (what I call feelings). Some people's feelings include bodily aspects, and some don't. [Michael: Right.] And they're just as legitimate. There's no reason that a, a bodily feeling (that I can see), that a bodily feeling is better than, deeper than whatever, than a mental, what I call a mental feeling,[Michael: Yeah.] which is non bodily.
- 12:29 Russ comments: This is mostly iterative training, aimed more at *next week's* samples than at the present sample.

- 13:19 Michael: Yeah. We talked about this a little last time. I, and I tend to, at least with these negative emotions, to, uh, to, to be aware of, uh, uh, a sensation in my body.
- 13:31 RTH: So I'm not, I'm not arguing against that. I just... [Michael: Yeah.] What I don't want us to do is to fall into a trap that would be...
- 13:38 Michael: Yeah.
- 13:39 RTH: Presum, presuming.
- 13:40 Michael: Right.
- 13:41 RTH: So I'm gathering, I'm gathering that *most* of my experience is this thought-y mulling and but colored by, or part of my experience is a frustration/anger, which involves at least *in part* of sort of a warmth bodily thing.
- 14:02 Michael: Yeah. A warmth and a, and a, a a, a tightening. Uh, y'know, I, my experience of meditation is that you're either in this expanded or, uh, enlarged, y'know... you're either, uh, contracted or expanded. And this was, I could feel this as a contraction.
- 14:02 Russ comments: This is a return to the self-theory (see the comment at 11:23).
- 14:24 RTH: Mm-hmm. And by and by bodily do you mean a particular part of my body? It's in my shoulders. It's in my fists. It's in my heart. It's...[yeah, I]...
- 14:36 Michael: I would be speculating to say right now, I, I, I don't remember that. I don't know that it was so clear to me. Um, it's on, y'know, it's one of those sensations or feelings that's on the verge of half thought, half physical. But, but which part of me, I, I couldn't tell you. I just, I just, there was a tensing.
- 14:36 Russ comments: When Michael tells me it's bodily, but can't specify which part of the body is involved, then I have to wonder whether the "bodily" description is more self-theoretical than descriptive. I'm no mind reader, but what did *not* happen here is that in the seconds immediately after the beep, Michael noticed that he felt angry which was a warm tensing in his chest, and he jotted those aspects down in his notebook so as to be able to confidently describe his at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience. That is *not* what happened here; why not is still an open question. But this is Michael's fourth sampling day, and it should be apparent that if his at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience included such aspects, I'd like him to jot them down so we can talk about them. That he did not do so is consonant with feelings being not clearly apprehended, or not clearly present at the moment of the beep; with feelings being implied or contextual.
- 15:00 RTH: Mm-Hmm. So that, y'know, I'm, my job is to try to understand what you're telling me here. And... [Yeah.] What I'm understanding is I feel anger or frustration, it's not the most prominent thing to me, cuz the mulling is more prominent. And, and it seems reasonable to say something bodily, that there's something bodily about the

frustration, anger, but not explicitly bodily, because I can't really tell you where it is in my body. It's, it doesn't seem like it's *not* bodily. And yet it doesn't seem like it's distinctly bodily either. Is that right?

15:00 Russ comments: This is iterative training aimed at clarifying whether an experience is bodily.

15:38 Michael: Yeah. I mean, I, I think that's a memory issue. I think if you had asked me immediately when the beep came, I might have been able to say I felt it in my, I don't know, face or, y'know, but I, I just can't now reconstruct that. [RTH: Fair enough.] I'll pay attention to it next time.

15:55 RTH: Fair enough. And, and that, and the, I, "I'll pay attention to that" is the kind of thing that makes, that makes DES an that's the iterative process, that makes DES important because... [Michael: Right.] Well, I would like, I, I am interested in whether feelings are bodily or not. And if you pay attention right at the moment, at the moment of the beep, then you would be in a, that's the best position, the best time that we've got the best opportunity we have to say, *yes, they were bodily and, and they were in my face, or no, they weren't bodily at all. I just felt 'em, and they weren't bodily.* Either one of those would be fine with me. [Michael: Yeah.] I don't have a preference.

16:27 Michael: Yeah. I don't either. Um, [RTH: Except...] I think that, um, yeah, and that's, y'know, that's what I'm learning to do over the course of these, uh, sessions, is interrogate the experience with a little more care than I did when I started. I'm always asking myself now, were these words, who were they spoken by? Uh, were there words? Who were they spoken by? If so, were there images? I mean, the kinds of things we've been talking about. Um...

16:58 RTH: And that, that's a necessary, necessary portion. And, and I would, uh, but I would, I would add *one more* thing to that. And that is that I would hope that you would be, well, two, two more things I guess I want to add. One is, I, I would hope that you would be attending to things even that we haven't talked about, because I'm not smart enough or experienced enough or know you well enough to ask the right kinds of things. So, so I *don't* want you just to have a catalog: *Well, Russ asked this and this and this, and therefore I gotta check about this, this, this, and that.* What I want is for you to sort of take on board *Well, Russ is interested in my experience in sort of high fidelity, and lemme see whether I can grasp it in high fidelity and then tell him about it.* That's, that's the, and the, the second thing is it's not so much a *cataloging* or an inter- inter-, it's not so much an *interrogation*, cuz I don't want you to go through a checklist. *Well, I gotta check bodily, I gotta check mental, I gotta check left arm.* [Michael: Mm-Hmm, right.] That's not the deal. The question is, has the experience, is there passing by the footlights of consciousness, whatever that means, try to freeze-dry it, I guess, so that then you can ex describe to the details of it.

18:16 Michael: Yeah. Okay. So...

18:17 RTH: I'm...

18:18 Michael: It's true. I mean, it's a lot of, I do feel like there's a catalog and there's a lot to pay attention to. So the, um, uh, so in that moment, I mean, sometimes I can pay more attention to it than other times. If I'm sitting at my desk, it's not hard. I... one of the beeps you'll see I was driving and, um, uh, almost ran a red light when the beep went off [laughs]. Um, and, uh, uh, but stopping to think about the moment *for me* is by breaking it down into some different elements.

18:51 RTH: So what I've got is a, a thought-y and a feel-y go to going on simultaneously. More thought-y than feel-y.

18:58 Michael: Yeah. Not a lot of words.

19:00 RTH: And no words.[Yeah.] Then I think I'm good. I'm ready to go on number 2.

SAMPLE 4.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

19:05 Michael: And if I had to categorize it, it was an instance of mind wandering. Um, okay. Number 2 was just a, I don't know, 20 minutes later, um, Judith, my wife and I were walking down the hill from our house to downtown to get a cup of coffee, which is a common routine in the morning. Um, I had started a sentence, um, and I was in the middle of that sentence when the beep went off. And the, and what I was saying, uh, and again, this is aloud, was "When I was walking yesterday." Um, the thought that I was about to complete was already in my head at the moment of the beep. Right. My speaking was a little bit behind my thinking, but I know exactly what thought was in my head at that second, which was, um... yesterday evening, I'd been walking in town and was reminiscing to myself about the, uh, that first spring, March, 2020, of COVID. Um, and how different the world was.

20:25 And I was gonna tell her, I was gonna remind her, y'know, what those walks were like, that was something we did every day, twice a day. And, um, and there were no cars on the street. And, um, when you pass somebody on the sidewalk, you gave them a very wide berth. Cuz we were all terrified of infecting one another. You would actually, would actually go out into the street where there were no cars and come go around them. Some, and some people had masks, but not in those early days. Um, and the sense we had that, uh, nature was undisturbed by what was throwing us, uh, into such terror and tumult, and that the trees were going through their cycle of bloom, magnolia, cherry. And, uh, so anyway, it was, I was just, this was all in my head and I was about to talk to her about it, and we were gonna reminisce about it when beep went off.

19:05 Russ comments: I accept as a fact that Michael is speaking, and I accept as a fact that the speaking is aimed at the recollection of the Covid-March-2020 walking. But this description does not at all describe what, if anything, Michael is experiencing at the moment of the beep. Are all the March-2020 details present to him? Some of those details? Which ones? How are they present? Visually? Experienced some other way? Implied? Is it possible to sort that out? We will have to work at it.

- 21:22 RTH: So I think I've got, I think I've got the situation here. I think I, I think I understand it. And so would, would you say your direct experience is more about the words that you're speaking ("when I was walking yesterday") or more about the, the subject matter that you're gonna talk about (March 2020 and the leaves and the pathways and the births and the whatever)?
- 21:49 Michael: Well, what you say in reality in the present is, I think is always gonna be more salient. Um, but I, I did, I did detect the thought right behind, y'know, that, that he, I had written the lines that I was gonna say, I mean, y'know, speaking metaphorically, and I knew what they were about.
- 22:08 RTH: So let's, let's, let's, let's unpack that and... [Michael: Yeah.] for, for a couple of reasons. So one is what you say out loud, you just said of *of course, that's most directly present to you*. That is *not* necessarily true at all. There are many people who speak aloud and don't have any experience at all of speaking *ever*. But, but the words came out, but they didn't, never noticed it. And there are other people who speak aloud and, and *hear* their words—they don't have a sense of speaking it, but they hear it. And so they're, they're speaking, they're hearing the words at the same time. I'm, I'm hearing their words. So that's, so that's one thing. So let's not presume...
- 22:47 Michael: Alright, so then I'll own, then I'll own it [laughs] how it was for me.[RTH: Okay.] Um...
- 22:53 RTH: So, and then the, the, and then the second thing is: you said, "I had sort of written the script of what I was about to say," or I forget exactly the written draft of what I...
- 23:04 Michael: ...Was Yeah. The words were, I mean, I, the words I knew, I knew the words. Um, I wasn't surprising myself by what I said. Sometimes you do surprise yourself by what you said...
- 23:13 RTH: But the, but the scene that you're describing is a vastly complex scene about springtime and covid and walking and cherry trees and whatever. Do you have, so do you have that, all that stuff?
- 23:31 Michael: No, I don't have it all in my head. I have, um...uh, wait, how'd my sentence begin? [Looks at notebook] Um, uh, yeah, that, thinking about COVID, March, 2020, I mean, and that to me is a, is a label for a whole complex of thoughts having to do with nature and, and, uh, how we walked on the street and how we encountered each other. But I wasn't, that wasn't all present to me. Um, but it was under that, it was in that bag of stuff I was planning to talk about.
- 24:10 RTH: So that's the distinction that I would like us to keep, keep clear. So it's, and I, I want to accept that all of that, all of that stuff, it's not like it's unimportant, but it's somehow present to me in a *different way* than what I might have gonna be said next. So if, so, if what you're saying to me is, I had already said when I was walking yesterday and I was about to say something, COVID 2020, then all the rest of that

stuff is sort of the *implication* of Covid 2020, which is different from COVID 2020. So...

24:45 Michael: Yeah, it's, I mean, it's, it all goes under that label. I think I, y'know, it wasn't, was all that present to me at once, probably not. But there's this bolus of stuff called Covid March, 2020 that I plan to open up. Um...

24:45 Russ comments: I agree with that. The question is how much of that is present before the footlights of consciousness at the moment of the beep. We still haven't been able to clarify that.

25:07 RTH: So I understand that the question is what, what of it is present? And so here, here are some possibilities. I say out loud "when I was walking yesterday," and then I have some sense of this bolus of things that I'm gonna talk about, the sidewalk and the trees and whatever. Or, that's option number one. Option number two is, I say out loud "when I was walking yesterday," and it's a fact of my saying that what's coming is a talk about 20, COVID 2020, even though that's not directly present to me, that's what, that's, and...

25:47 Michael: Well, the details, the details are not directly present to me.

25:53 RTH: Or, or, so that would be option three from my point of view. Option two was, *nothing* of that is actually directly present to me, in the same sense as the coffee is not directly present to me. I'm walking towards a coffee. [Michael: Yeah.] But the coffee is not present to me. It's, it's implied by every step that I take. This step is heading towards coffee. But that does not mean that the coffee is directly present to me at that moment. What's present to me at that moment is, is March 2020.

26:17 Michael: You mean the *thought* of coffee?

26:19 RTH: The thought of coffee or *anything* about coffee!

26:21 Michael: Mm-Hmm.

26:22 RTH: At that, at that moment. The coffee is driving every step that we take, I'm heading towards the coffee shop.

26:28 Michael: Yeah. But it's not present...

26:30 RTH: But it's not present to me. So the question is, this bolus of, of, uh, COVID thoughts, is that directly present to me? Or is that implied in the, in the, in the speaking and, and in the third <crosstalk>,

26:50 Michael: It's more present than the coffee because, because there's a perception accompanying this statement and these thoughts, which is, I'm looking at trees in the same state of bloom they were, then I'm looking at magnolia, um, that's, y'know, doing its thing. And that's, I think that's kind of what's kicked off the memory. Um, so it's there *somewhere*...but y'know, if we're gonna prioritize it,

y'know, I haven't, I mean, if I looked at this as a train of thought, here's the engineer, and I kind of, I have a sense of what's behind me... the other cars. But, so I sort of feel like you can have that sense without them being, uh, present in the same way those words were in the same way, the basic ideas.

26:50 Russ comments: We will have to distinguish carefully between what is directly experienced, what is in *some sort of* sense, and what is referred to metaphorically. It's not easy.

27:50 RTH: So I, I, I do think that's true. And I, but I, but I don't think what I, what I *don't* think it's necessarily true is that you *have* that sense. I think it's *possible* to have a sense, but it's not *required* to have a sense. [Michael: Right.] In the same sense as it, it's possible to be thinking about the Starbucks that I'm walking to, [Michael: Yeah.] and it's also possible to be walking towards Starbucks without thinking about Starbucks at all. That from the *outside*, you probably couldn't tell the difference: it step is in, y'know... But, and, and from the *inside*, well, there, I'm guessing that at this particular moment, there's no Starbucks thought. There's no Starbucks experience. Is it Starbucks?

28:32 Michael: No, it's not. But it's a local place.

28:35 RTH: So there's no coffee shop, there's no coffee shop at this particular experience. It drives, it drives this experience in an important way, but it's not *experienced* directly.

28:46 Michael: Not at this moment. I mean, y'know, a few moments, hence, I might, y'know, start fantasizing about the coffee and the smell and the taste and everything.

28:54 RTH: Yeah, but, but that's *then* and not *now*.

28:56 Michael: Right, right.

28:57 RTH: And, and so the question is about what is present at this moment apparently is March, 2020.

29:08 Michael: Yeah. And, and that's a shorthand, I think, in my head for a whole complex of things. And yeah, you're saying, are they present or not? And I'm saying, they're somehow informing the moment without being yet directly present.

29:08 Russ comments: That is an important distinction: informing or affecting the moment without being directly present at that moment.

29:35 RTH: So...

29:36 Michael: I mean, when I leave them out, I don't have the same moment exactly.

29:40 RTH: I *totally* agree with that, with that. But that does *not* mean that you have any direct experience of them, either, or that, or, or if it, so, so I haven't...

29:51 Michael: No, I would say it's indirect, actually.

29:54 RTH: Yeah. I haven't gotten to option number four either. Option number *four* is I have, I am speaking aloud "when I was walking yesterday," the beep comes on "yesterday," it seems, and I know *exactly*, I have present to me exactly in my, before the footlights of my consciousness, what the next words are going to be. And the next words are, let's say, "when I was walking yesterday..."

30:20 Michael: "I was thinking about..."

30:21 RTH: "I was thinking about March, 2020..."

30:24 Michael: "...and what those walks were like."

30:25 RTH: "...and what those walks were like." ... So I, I could have that *sentence*, those *words*, that sentence present to me, and I know what those sentence, what that sentence means. It has to do with magnolia trees and cherry trees and people walking on the sidewalk and whatever. Even though that stuff is present to me at a different level. So there's lots of different levels of specificity, I guess you could say, in which, in which *March 2020* can be present to me. I, it could be directly present, but not yet said, but, but the words are there. Or it could be the whole thing is implied and or in some way, I, I understand it even though I don't directly apprehend it. And that's, that's...

31:14 Michael: Yeah, I don't, I don't know. I don't know how to parse that exactly. I'm, I'm just, what I'm, what I'm trying to hold onto is this idea that the, the, the words present to me, the words *I'm about to speak* that are forming in my head are themselves attached to these other words that are coming behind them. And there is *some way* in which I'm aware of them at that moment. And, but is it direct exp they're not directly in my consciousness.

31:49 RTH: So are, are there, are there future words present to you, words that have *not yet been uttered*, but are present in your experience at the moment of the beep? Which would've been my option 4, I guess.

32:05 Michael: Yeah, um, besides, I was thinking yesterday about the, the, the walks like this we took in March, 2020 and what they were like.

32:15 RTH: So the question is the...

32:17 Michael: And the first thing I was going to, but I knew the first thing I was gonna say of those things. Which was, um, because Judith was kind of extreme about it. She would like go *way out* into the street to go around people and, and give them this very wide berth. And I thought that was kind of funny and very her. Um... so... I don't know. I think I knew that that was, that was coming.

- 32:50 RTH: I don't doubt that in the slightest. The question is whether it's before the footlights of your consciousness or whether it is somewhere in,
- 33:00 Michael: I would say it's the stage right or stage left. Do y'know what I mean? It's not on stage yet. But when you're standing on stage, you know, the next act, you know what's coming in the present, even if it's not before the lights. Sometimes, not always.
- 33:23 RTH: So when Hamlet is, (or whoever it is) is standing on the stage saying "to be, or not to be," *he knows* what's coming in, what's coming. And that *colors* every word that he says every, every word of "to be, or not to be" is colored by act three or whatever it is. (I'm not a Shakespeare fan."
- 33:45 Michael: Yeah. Yeah. Both past and future words. Of course, he's read the whole script, which we usually haven't done.
- 33:52 RTH: And prac and practiced it and [Michael: Right.] and here's what happened off stage and knows what problems he's got with his costume and knows what the, that the understudy isn't as good as the guy who's supposed to be playing, playing opposite him, and that the audience is only half full and he wished it was three quarters full and that the snowstorm is outside and all that shit. All that stuff is, informs in some way the word "to" in "to be, or not to be." And the word "be" and the word "not," and whatever. All that stuff is there. [Michael: Okay.] I don't, I don't doubt that for a moment. But if you *beeped* him, would he be thinking about the audience? Well, probably not. And would he be thinking about the, y'know, act three? Well, probably not. It informs it. [Michael: Yeah.] But it's not directly apprehended.
- 33:52 Russ comments: The distinction that RTH is making is between (a) being directly apprehended and (b) shaping, guiding, informing without being directly apprehended.
- 34:38 Michael: Yeah. And okay, I, I accept that interpretation.
- 34:43 RTH: And so the, the question here, and I don't think we're gonna be able to answer it about this beep. So the conversation that we're having is more about next time than it is about this time.
- 34:51 Michael: Yeah.
- 34:52 RTH: The, the question is, are there words present to you that have not yet been spoken? And, but I'm about to speak them. So I know that the next words are gonna be, "when I was walking yesterday, I was thinking about the way you walked in the street," or whatever, whatever those words might be. Those words *could be* present. *Or* they could be, the whole thing might just, the whole future thing might be *implied*. And I, and I, I know where these words are going. I understand these words are going there, but it's not directly in.

35:27 Michael: Well, I think we have three packets of stuff here. We have the words that I'm saying. [RTH: Okay.] We have the words I'm *about* to say, which I am thinking as I'm saying the other words—*that* is really clear to me. And, and then we have the third packet of where I'm going, [RTH: Okay. And, and there's less...] more inchoate sense of that, obviously. cuz I haven't, I haven't framed it.

35:27 Russ comments: Michael's "second packet" contains words that are "really clear to me..."

35:54 RTH: So what, what's in the second packet?

35:57 Michael: The second packet is the immediate, uh, "I was thinking about the walks we took at the beginning of COVID."

36:03 RTH: Quote "I was thinking about the walks we took at the beginning of covid" unquote?

36:07 Michael: Pretty much. Yeah.

36:08 RTH: 'Pretty much' and in quotes are *not* the same thing [they laugh]

36:08 Russ comments: First, if words are really clear, then it would seem that Michael should be able to quote them. Second, what Micheal had said in his opening description (19:05) was "I know exactly what thought was in my head at that second, which was, um... yesterday evening, I'd been walking in town and was reminiscing to myself about the, uh, that first spring, March, 2020, of COVID. Um, and how different the world was." The two renditions are similar but not exact.

The issue is whether, at the moment of the beep, there are directly apprehended about-to-be-spoken *words* or a directly apprehended *concept* that will become spoken; and if a concept, whether that concept is tightly enough conceptualized as to imply particular specific words. Note that RTH does not have a preference for concepts, or for words that are clear, or for words that are somehow implied or understood—either way is fine with him. However, he *does* have a preference for understanding what is being conveyed. He would like to know what Michael intends when he says "words are really clear to me." But clarifying that is proving very difficult.

36:12 Michael: [laughs] Well, the sentence begins when I, when I was walking yesterday. Yeah. I was thinking about the walks we took in March, 2020 during, at the beginning of COVID.

36:23 RTH: That whole sentence is present to you.

36:25 Michael: Yeah. More or less. I mean, I mean, y'know, I mean, you don't always have perfect sentences and you're, you're, you're thinking, but this one was as close to that as I usually get.

36:25 Russ comments: The content here morphs from whether words are present *at all* to whether a sentence has to be *complete*. Still more stuff that needs to be sorted out.

36:38 RTH: So I don't care whether you have perfect sentences or not. There. And there's a literature out there that says in the inner speaking literature that says, people don't speak in perfect...

36:49 Michael: [Sentences.] Right. Without, and no full stops. And they often don't put in the personal pronoun. Right.

36:55 RTH: And, and I think that that literature is not very careful about inspecting inner experience. I would like us to be careful enough so that we know. So I don't, I don't, I don't care which side of the coin we come out of, that there was a perfect sentence, or there wasn't a perfect sentence. I have, I have, I would just like us to get it right.

37:14 Michael: Yeah. And I, I doubt it was perfect, but it was, but I, I knew what I was gonna say. I knew the, I certainly knew the content, the tense.

37:14 Russ comments: There are four possibilities that we are trying to clarify: (a) there is content that drives my talk with Judith, and whereas that content certainly exists in some way, it is not at all before the footlights of consciousness; (b) there is content that drives my talk with Judith, and that that content is directly present to me but not in words; (c) there is content that drives my talk with Judith, and part of that content is present in words, but those words are not in complete sentences; and (d) there is content that drives my talk with Judith, and at least part of that content is innerly present in words that are in complete sentences that have not yet been spoken. We have been working on those distinctions across several samples across several sampling days, and we have not yet figured out how to talk about them.

Michael is smart, motivated, knowledgeable, and articulate; Russ is smart, motivated, knowledgeable, and articulate; but we haven't distinguished among those possibilities. That in itself is interesting; it would also be interesting to figure out why this is as difficult as it seems to be. Maybe those distinctions are impossible for anyone, and Russ has been mistaken when he finds them relatively easy for others. Maybe those distinctions are difficult or impossible for Michael when they are easy for others; if so, why? Maybe Michael has presuppositions about something in this vicinity that confuse him and/or me. Maybe.... I'm not trying to answer any of those questions at this point; I'm just trying to clarify what we mean when we talk to each other about those things.

37:22 RTH: So knowing, so the, the, the first major distinction is between *knowing the content* and having directly apprehended the *words* that will be spoken. Those are two very different things, it seems to me. But for, but, but, but for you, they might not be different for you. Uh, there might not be a clear distinction between knowing the content and knowing the words. That's what we gotta figure out here. But I don't, what I *don't* want us to do is to just sort of be sloppy about it and say, well, y'know, I knew the content and therefore I knew the words when, when I didn't really know the words. I would like us to know what we're talking about, about that.

- 37:58 Michael: Yeah. Well, I, I had a, a pretty clear sense of what I was gonna say. I often start talking without a clear sense of what I'm gonna say. But this time I did, I, in a way, I'd rehearsed this the night before by having all these thoughts. These were like, I was getting her up to date on thoughts I was having when we *weren't* together last night. Um, so this was more formed than it, I think it would be normally. [pause] But, but what interested me about it, too, was the fact that I could be saying something while thinking something else or something additional. And that was, and that was clearly part of the experience... that I wasn't *just* immersed in what I was saying, that I was, y'know, what, what got interrupted. I mean, there was a sentence fully formed, I think that got interrupted, at least the first one. I mean, I couldn't tell you exactly what it was, but it was something like we just, we just went over.
- 39:10 RTH: So I, I think it is quite possible (and usual actually) to be thinking about something other than what you're saying. I, I don't think that's at all surprising to me. But the, when, what I, what I want us to do is to focus as directly as we can, and with as much fidelity as we can, as I would prefer to say, on what that other thing was and how that other thing was present to you. So there, the words that we're speaking, and then there's where we're going, and that's somehow present to me. But it could be present to me as a visual image, or a collage or something. I see my wife on the street and I see the cherry trees and the magnolias, and...
- 39:55 Michael: It was definitely word-y and not image-y.[RTH: Mm-Hmm.] I remember the phrase giving a wide berth, for example, as part of how I was gonna phrase this memory, even though that wasn't, that was a little, a little bit down the road from what I was about to say.
- 40:19 RTH: So what I, that, so that could mean: as I'm speaking the words what I was walking when, when I was walking yesterday. And at the same time, I have the words present to me somehow "giving a wide berth." And, and I know those words are down the road a, a little ways, but they're *present* to me.
- 40:37 Michael: Not, not at that moment. No, not, not exactly at that moment.
- 40:42 RTH: That would be fine to me. I think it could, I'm, I'm not trying to say that that's the way it *was*. I'm trying to say these are the way it *could be*. [Michael: Yeah.] And what I want us to do is to work at trying to do as good a job as we, as we can get about this kind of thing. [Michael: Yeah.] And that *might be*, y'know, after we've practiced at this for a while, we might say, well, y'know, *this is good, as good as I can do*. This is, I don't, my experience doesn't...
- 41:08 Michael: Yeah. No, I mean, it's...yeah. I'm just trying not to lose the sense I had that in the sentence that followed what was interrupted, that there was a, a sense to it, that it was fuller than just the words when we had took these walks in March, 2020, um, that it was somehow, it was somehow pregnant with that other material.

41:36 RTH: So I don't wanna lose that either. But I, but, but I don't think it had, I don't think that pregnancy has to be directly apprehended. [Michael: Yeah.] in the, sort of the same sense as we've talked about the...

41:48 Michael: So is there another kind of apprehension?

41:57 RTH: [pause]Yeah, I think the, for the, for example, in the, in the Hamlet (is it Hamlet "to be, or not to be? Is it Hamlet? [Michael: Yeah.]) The, the, uh, all, all those words are pregnant with the third act, even though the third act is not directly present to me. I'm a skilled actor and, and I know what's coming. And I, and I'm, I'm inflecting these words so that when we get down the road, tho, those words will have the impact that I want them to, to have those words will have had the impact I want them to have. But that doesn't mean that my, that, that way, what the impact that I want them to have has to be directly presentive to me. [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] It's part of my skill of talking. I'm a skilled talker, and you're a skilled talker. Not an, you're not an actor, but you're a skilled talker, to your wife. And so y'know what's coming and you, and so you've inflected the first part of the sentence so that the second part of the sentence is going to make sense or whatever.[Michael: Mm-Hmm.] But that doesn't mean that you, that you had to an explicit notion of what's coming.

41:57 Russ comments: The reference to the "third act" should have been to the "fourth and fifth act." (Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy is in Act III of five acts, rather than in Act II of three acts as I had remembered it.)

Also: RTH is continuing to try to make the distinction between directly apprehended and implied/contextual/etc. It might have been informative to remind Michael of his samples that did seem to involve direct apprehensions: the innerly spoken "Pepper!" of sample 3.4, and the innerly seen stage of sample 3.5.

43:15 Michael: No, but, and any...

43:17 RTH: It's sort of, it's sort of the same thing as I'm, I'm walking to the coffee shop and, uh, and I'm walking at a particular *pace* to the coffee shop because I *know* I have an appointment with Joe Smith at 11 o'clock, and I gotta get to the coffee and back. And so I'm walking with a *little bit* more rapidity than I might have otherwise. But that doesn't mean I'm thinking about Joe Smith. That means [Michael: Right.] I, I'm skillfully incorporating stuff. Or you could be thinking about Joe Smith. "God, I gotta get back. I gotta get.... Come on, Judith! Let's get..."

43:43 Russ comments: RTH is continuing to try to make the distinction between directly apprehended and implied/contextual/etc.

43:58 Michael: Yeah. I mean, I think a lot of this has to do with how long is a moment of consciousness and we're, we're cutting it very, we're slicing it very thin.

44:11 RTH: I don't think that's quite true. I don't, I don't think we're slicing it thin. What we're, what we're, what we're slicing it is, there's a temporal spec, specificity about it, but it's not thin. [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] Specific, but it's not thin. So you could have been thinking about this, what I should, what I should tell Judith about that, you could

have been thinking about that for the last five minutes, as far as I'm concerned. And the beep catches you while you're still thinking about it. That's part of, that's the experience. So the moment doesn't have to be *short*, it just has to be *at that moment*. And then...

44:47 Michael: I'm not sure I get that distinction. Exactly. [pauses]. I mean, do people, do different people give you different length moments of consciousness?

45:02 RTH: Yes. And I don't, and I don't much care about that. What I care about is whether it, whether it's present at a particular moment. Y'know, for some, for example, some people when they have a visual image, you had a, you had a visual image yesterday or last time about the, the, uh, MC on the stage. You were the master ceremonies of something, something, and the guy was, the guy was missing something. You had a visual image

45:30 Michael: Yeah. On the stage. Right. That was...

45:32 RTH: And I'm guessing that visual image was there and gone within a few seconds, or a second, or something like that, because that's what most visual images are for most people. But I've sampled with some people who have con who, who for whom I'm convinced that visual imagery stays for a long time, measured in minutes or hours even. And so I have this visual image, and I continue to have this visual image, and I continue to have this visual image. I got beeped, now I have the visual image, y'know, if I get beeped next time I have the same image, and if I get beeped next time I have the same visual image. That's rare, but that visual image could be hours long. As long as it's present at the moment of the beep, then that counts as the experience that I'm interested in. And most of the time, I, I'm not particularly interested in the length of experience. So I didn't ask you how long had you had this image of the, the missing chairs or whatever. Because most of the, most of the time, I think that's a difficult or impossible question to answer, so I don't ask it. But I, but I don't discount the fact that it could have been for a long time. It could have been for a short time.

46:41 Michael: Okay. Okay. So my sense is this moment of consciousness, there are things that weren't directly present but, but had a bearing on it and sort of suffused it in some way. And that if I were to write an account of it, it would be, it wouldn't be honest to pretend it wasn't there at all, even though certain parts of this were more present to direct experience than others.

46:41 Russ comments: That seems to be exactly the distinction I would like us to make: between (a) directly present and (b) having a bearing or suffusing.

47:15 RTH: And, and I think that's totally fair. So it wouldn't be, it wouldn't be honest to say it wasn't there. And it *also* wouldn't be honest to say that it was there *directly*.

47:25 Michael: No, it wasn't in the footlights.

47:27 RTH: It wasn't in the footlights. But it, but it, it wasn't, it wasn't non-existent either. I'm totally, I think that's, I think that's the way it is. As long as we distinguish between those two things. And I'm not, so, I'm, I'm, I'm not, trying to say that the Judith out in the street *wasn't* present to you, but I *haven't* heard you say, I have a particular visual image of Judith out in the street, or I'm remembering particularly at this moment, Judith, out in the street. I know it's coming in some way. It's shaping the sentence that I've... but its...

48:04 Michael: Yeah, no, this is, this is definitely all words. And y'know, yesterday when I had the actual thoughts, they were much more visual. It was interesting. But today, when I'm kind of recounting them, they're, uh, they were strictly in words.

48:25 RTH: Okay.

48:27 Michael: So...

48:27 Russ comments: A few days later, Michael emailed Russ:

Russ: I was reading over in the transcript the long discussion we had of what we can call for short hand the Judith/Covid memory beep. I kept insisting that the moment would be different if you removed from it the train of thought about to appear before the footlights because they were not "directly" present. Over the weekend I was rereading William James on the stream of consciousness and came across this line which pretty well captures what I was trying to get at:

Annihilate a mind at any instant, cut its thought through whilst yet uncompleted, and examine the object present to the cross-section thus suddenly made; you will find, not the bald word in process of utterance, but that word suffused with the whole idea. (James, 1890, p. 282)

I agree with James, which I think is the same point I was trying to make about the coffee steps at 25:53: I could have said that the step is not a bald step in the process of walking, but that step is suffused with the whole idea of heading toward the coffee shop. Or at 41:57 I could have said that the "to" of Hamlet's "to be, or not to be" is not the bald "to" in process of utterance, but the "to" suffused with the whole idea of what will happen in later acts, and what has happened in previous acts, as well as the imperfections in the costuming, the audience size, etc.

So I fully, absolutely, completely, wholeheartedly accept that context matters. Context *always* matters. But what Michael and Russ have not been able to do (as it seems to Russ) is consistently to differentiate adequately between context and phenomena.

For example, Michael's experience at the moment of beep 4.2 *could have been*: 4.2x: innerly seeing Judith standing in an empty street. If so, that innerly seen Judith would have been suffused with, underlain by, pointing toward the whole Covid 19 story that Michael was poised to tell, including, for example, the fact that the 2020 magnolia and cherry trees had been obviously continuing to blossom, even though the inner seeing of Judith *did not include* magnolia or cherry trees or most of the other details that Michael is preparing to describe. Michael's experience at the moment of beep 4.2 *could have been*: 4.2y: While walking, I was focusing on the

magnolia tree, noticing in particular the brilliant pink of the blossoms and its contrast with the fresh green of the leaves. If so, that directly present sensory awareness would have been suffused with, underlain by, pointing toward the whole Covid 19 story that Michael was poised to tell, including, for example, that Judith frequently went way into the street, even though the magnolia-tree experience *did not include* Judith or streets or most of the other details that Michael is preparing to describe.

The point here is that *everything* that is directly apprehended is suffused with, underlain by, pointing toward details that go beyond what is directly apprehended. But those suffusings, underlyings, implications should be kept distinct from what is directly apprehended. In the actual sample 4.2, what is directly apprehended (if anything) is the talking; in the hypothetical sample 4.2x, the visual image is directly apprehended; in the hypothetical sample 4.2y, the colorful blossoms/leaves are directly apprehended. Those three direct apprehensions are very different from each other. But the context of each is basically (if not identically) the same: I'm going to tell Judith about my walk last night.

So I do not at all want to ignore the context—context is important. But I do want us to differentiate (if we can) the directly apprehended experience from the context. If we can't, then it would be interesting to figure out why not.

48:28 RTH: Yeah, I think, I think we ought to go on to beep number 2, 3.

48:31 Michael: Okay. That was a long beep. Um...

48:37 RTH: And, and I, and I would say that the, the object is from my point of view is **not** to get through all the beeps.

48:44 Michael: Yeah, I know.

48:45 RTH: Know. The object is to develop the...

48:48 Michael: ...The tools.

48:49 RTH: ...the tools, the skills, what the, what it needed, what in order to understand each other.

48:54 Michael: Right. No, that's fine. Um, this one's pretty simple. I think straightforward.

49:01 RTH: We'll see! [they laugh]

SAMPLE 4.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

49:05 Michael: Uh, so we are get, so our car was at the, um, at the mechanics shop having worked one of our cars, and Judith's gonna drop me off there. So we're getting into the car, we're in the driveway. And I know from coming back from our walk, which we've already done, that there was a giant tree stump. They took down a redwood in our neighbor's yard, uh, two houses down, three houses down. And they were gonna be grinding it today. And there was this machine that had begun grinding this giant tree

stump (I mean, it really was 10 feet across) into, um, into mulch. And the noise is really loud, and I'm thinking ahead to my day. And the thought I have when the beep goes off is, *am I gonna have to listen to this all day?* And it isn't yet another, uh, case of annoyance. Um, I don't think it was phrased that crisply. It was like, *me, listen*, y'know, *work, distracted*, y'know, it was just like, ugh. And I had days like that when they were taking down the tree also. Um, so it was like, here we go again. Um, and I had, y'know, it was barely articulated with a, with a, a sense of irritation or annoyance. Um...

50:38 Michael: As it turns out, it only took 'em like an hour, and they were done [laughs]. But, um, so that, that's what that was. That moment was like, ugh, y'know, here we go again. Noise.

50:50 RTH: So, I've, I've, I've heard this thought expressed in a several different ways now. One is, "am I going to have to listen to this all day?" And another is just some words: "me, listen, work, ugh and some others—noise, whatever." So is this thought in words?

51:17 Michael: Yeah, there are words, but it's, they're, they're not arranged in a sentence, I would say. I would say it's still kind of, y'know, I *could have* said this aloud to Judith, and it would've jelled. It, it hadn't quite jelled yet. It was just like, um, it was, I didn't even, it was so obvious, y'know, the phenomenon here that I didn't need to shape it in any way into words. Um, so it was kind of, I would say it was preverbal.

51:17 Russ comments: "There are words" seems substantially different from "it is preverbal." We apparently still haven't figured out how (or whether it is possible) to discriminate the directly apprehended from the theoretical/implicit.

51:51 RTH: Preverbal.

51:51 Michael: I'm giving you a translation when I say, uh, "I'm, I'm, I gonna have to listen to this all, all."

51:56 RTH: So this, this is a distinction that I think is important. Whether it's in words or whether it is what you call pre-verbal, and I might call it something else, or w but I, so I think it's quite *possible* to have a *thought* that is quite *specific*. And this thought is quite specific as this is some pain in the neck. I gotta listen to this, this is gonna disturb me, whatever. That's the thought that I'm having. And that thought *could be* in words, and it *could not* be in words. And if it *is* in words, all a whole sentence worth, the words are just a partial words. And if it is words, how do those words appear? All those distinctions are important to me.

52:35 Michael: Yeah. So the, I, I've noticed a phenomenon where I have a thought, and there are a couple words attached to it, but they're not necessarily syntactical or anything. They're just, they're like labels for what I'm feeling. And here the word "grinding" and "noise," I would say were the ones that, um, were there. But it was also combined with me, y'know, me, it affected me, my writing, y'know, what I was gonna do this morning. Um, so, so it just, it's this phenomenon where there, there

words floating around the thought, y'know, attaching to it in parts, but not completely representing it.

- 52:35 Russ comments: In 49:05, Michael had suggested that the thought was “am I gonna have to listen to this all day?” and then (still in 49:05) suggested that the words were “me,” “listen,” “work,” “distracted,” and “ugh.” Now, the words that “were there” are “grinding” and “noise.” Those are three entirely non-overlapping sets of words. It is apparently difficult (for reasons that we have not discovered) for Michael simply to say what was directly apprehended.
- 53:24 RTH: So the, the... what's... what, there's a lot of things that are interesting here, but *one* of the things that's interesting is that the words that you just identified (“grinding” and “noise”) were *not* in *e, any* of the earlier either that I can remember, of the earlier descriptions here. The first description was, “am I going to have to listen to this all day?” The words “grinding” and “noise” aren't there. And then it was “me,” “listen,” “work,” “Ugh,” and “grinding” and “noise” weren't there, either. And, and so now the, for, for me, the question is, well, what, what should, how, how should I understand that? What's, what's the deal here? And the answer. And, and the question for me is, *well, does Michael know what those words were?* And it just didn't tell me the first time around what's the deal with that?
- 54:14 And I'm not, I am *not* a mind reader. I am, I am distinctly *not* in the business of trying to figure out what Michael means when he doesn't say or say, or says. That's... My business as I conceptualize it, is to be interested in Michael's experience, to try to get Michael *interested* in Michael's experience, and to try to get *Michael* into a position where he can tell me about his experience in a way that he understands and I understand. And then I don't have to, I don't *have to* mind read. I'm a, I'm and, and, and so we have to have conversations like this. Well, y'know, are there words present? And if so, what are they? And if they're present, how are they present? And, and I don't, I don't know the answer to that. And I'm so far, I'm not convinced that *you* know the answer to that, but maybe you do.
- 55:09 Michael: No, I'm not sure in this case, I do. I, y'know, I may have been, when I wrote that down, those words in the notebook, there was a kind of, I was translating. [RTH: Okay.] I don't know *why!* Um, but I guess my automatic reflex when I have a thought that I need to, that I need to record, is to do that in words, and in a and in an organized sentence. But when I think back to what the experience felt like, it's, I've done some violence to it by turning it into a sentence.
- 55:09 Russ comments: This is a nice statement of what I think is among the most important things to understand about DES and any method that seeks to describe or understand experience. To what extent is Michael translating? Does everyone who wears the DES beeper translate in the same way and to the same extent? If we had sampled with Michael as an individual, but 20 or 40 years ago, would he have been translating in the same way? No one knows with confidence the answers to those questions.
- 55:50 RTH: So my, what I, what I think is interesting is what happens before you've violenced it and, uh,

55:58 Michael: [laughs] violated it.

55:59 RTH: Viol violated or whatever. The, and, and, and, and I think, y'know, I'm given, I'm given credit for being sort of an expert about, about inner speech, which I don't particularly consider myself an expert about inner speech. But I *think* the reason, I think the *reason* that I, that there's a, there's a, a thought out there that inner speech happens all the time. And the reason that, that they have that thought is for what you just said. You just said, well, y'know, when I write it down and I put it in words, and then I forget that it wasn't in words in the first place. So I think it must have been in words all the time. Well, that's, that may be true, but it also might be true, what you said was, well, putting in words actually does some violence to it, in which case it wasn't there. And when the frequency of inner speech would be lower.

56:46 Michael: Yeah.

56:47 RTH: And, and I, I, I'm interested in what Michael's experience actually is. *Not* so much in the ex, in how he

56:59 Michael: Recorded it.

56:59 RTH: Recorded it.

57:00 Michael: Yeah.

57:01 RTH: And, and the, the thing that makes, the thing that makes me different from, from most everybody else, I think, about this, is that I'm willing to go through the painful process (or I shouldn't say "painful" process, but the, the process. [Michael: Yeah.] It is a, it is a process. It's not, it's not at all painful for me.) But it's, it is a process and it takes time and to, to get, to sort of sweep away the preconceptions that people have.

57:30 Michael: Yeah. No, that's why I think this is really interesting. Cuz I, I think had I just written down the kind of more raw thought ("grind, noise, workday") y'know, um, it would've been a lot harder for me to tell you about it or, or describe it to anybody or *even remember it* myself, um, because it was like, huh, y'know, it's vague. It's not connected. There's no cause-effect. Um, so I agree. I think we moved to that stage too quickly to, to, to capture many thoughts. And that, y'know, just even writing that very quick notebook, um, notation has, has, uh, changed things.

57:30 Russ comments: Scenario 1: If Michael had directly apprehended, at the moment of the beep or in the split second thereafter, the words "grind," "noise," and "workday," I think the experience would *not* be difficult to remember. Michael would have jotted in his notebook something like:

Getting into car. The words "grind," "noise," and "workday," were present, not spoken or heard. Referred to stump removal.

That would have been enough, I think, to prompt a relatively unambiguous discussion during the interview.

Scenario 2: If the directly apprehended at-the-moment-of-the-beep experience somehow involved how the noise of the grinding was going to disturb his workday, but how that presented itself to Michael was not too clear, perhaps involving words, perhaps involving concepts, perhaps involving implications, perhaps involving recollections, then it would not be obvious what to jot in the notebook, and he might describe what he jotted as being a translation, and the interview would be ambiguous.

It seems to me that the actual situation is more likely similar to scenario 2 than scenario 1, but I'm no mind reader. The object of DES is to eliminate the need for my mind reading: across several or many sampling days (that is, iteratively), to clarify those distinctions *for Michael*, or to create new distinctions *guided by Michael*, so that *Michael himself* can make the required discriminations at the time when those discriminations are most likely to be able to be made (that is, in the second after the beep).

- 58:28 RTH: So, so let me, let me say what I think the options are here. And I'm, I'm, I'm gonna make it sound like it's sort of multiple choice, which I don't think it is multiple choice, but, [Michael: Okay.] but what I want us to do is to keep...
- 58:39 Michael: Do you want me to pick one?
- 58:40 RTH: No. [Michael: Okay.] What I'm, what I'm, what I'm, the conversation that we're having here is aimed at tomorrow, not, not at yesterday's beeps or whatever, today's beeps. But I think, I think there could be a, just, this is a *pure feeling* kind of a thing. *I'm, I'm irritated, annoyed*, and that's it. And then I wrote down in my notebook, well, the irritation is [inaudible] about the tree and the grinding and whatever. So it could be just totally feeling. It could be that there is a, I'm thinking about this: *How long is this gonna take? Am I gonna have to listen to this all day?* That's, and that's a thought that I translate into words, but the word, the original thought, didn't have any words to it. And yet, if I'm gonna, we're gonna talk about this, Russ's gonna ask me some questions about it, I'm gonna have to have some words to talk about it. But, but I don't think those words have to be there at the moment of the thinking. I think it's totally possible to think about something without having any words at all.
- 59:39 Michael: Mm hmm. I do too.
- 59:40 RTH: And then I think it's possible that there are some words present, like maybe "grinding" and "noise" or some other words that are, that are present to me at the moment that I'm getting into the car. The moment I'm, the moment here is I'm getting into the car, the, those words are present as a sort of a shorthand for the whole thought I'm having. Or maybe there's a whole sentence present. And if, and all of the times that words are present, then we have to think about, well, how are those words present? They could be spoken, they could be heard, they could be written on a black sheet of paper out in my imagination somewhere. And lots of different ways that words can be present. And, and Russ doesn't care. Russ, he

doesn't have a favorite. [Michael: Right.] What he, what he cares about, which he cares sort of a *lot* about, is trying to get it right. And, uh, and that he finds worth the effort, and he tries to convince other people that it's worth the effort and to go through the trouble of trying to, trying to figure out how to get it right. And, and I would also say that by getting it right, it doesn't mean we're trying to make Russ happy here, [Michael: Right.] because that's, that's not the goal. And it's certainly not the goal for, for you to think, oh, Russ is saying, "well, I should, I should say..." If I'm gonna make Russ happy, I gotta say there are no words here present here, or whatever. That's not true. I don't care whether there's words present or not. But if you wanna make Russ happy, the only way you can *really* make Russ happy is to try to figure out what's going on.

1:00:29 Russ comments: Russ should have included in his list of options that none of those options apply—that the kind of distinctions that Russ was making are not relevant to or possible in Michael's experience. (He implied that at 58:28 when he said "I don't think it is multiple choice," but he should have made it more explicit.) Getting to these-distinctions-don't-apply would make Russ happy as well. He makes that explicit below (in the 1:01:28 turn).

1:01:20 Michael: Yeah. Well, I thought this one was simple, but maybe it's not,

1:01:28 RTH: It's, it's a process. And I guess I wanted to say one more thing, which I started to say, and this is an, this is an example of how I started to say one thing and got somewhere down the road [Michael: Mm-Hmm.] to somewhere else. Cuz that happens too. But the, it's, I, I can ask questions that don't have answers and, and I don't want us to get to the place where a thought has to be *either* in words or not in words because Russ said, y'know, "was this thought in words or not?" That seems to *imply* that it had to be one way or the other. That doesn't, it's *not* the case. What I think, what I think we're doing here is we're grunting at each other and we're trying to calibrate our grunts so that they don't violate your sensibilities about what happened at the moment of the beep and they are intelligible to Russ. That's the, that's sort of the game that we're playing here, I guess. And it's, it's, it's by not by no means a trivially easy game to play. It's, but...

1:02:42 Michael: No, it's much harder than I would've guessed. And that's...

1:02:44 RTH: But it's sort of the central, the central-ist interesting thing in the, in human nature, it seems to me, as far as I can see, y'know, what's actually in your experience is pretty cool.

1:02:57 Michael: It's very cool. But our tools for understanding it are, of course, experience too[laughs].

1:03:03 RTH: That's right.

1:03:05 Michael: And, um, it makes it a uniquely hard, there's no, um, it's hard to find a, a place to stand outside and look at it with perfect objectivity, because all the processes of inquiry are at least risk, but usually do affect the object. And...

1:03:25 RTH: Uh, I think they *do* affect the, I think I, I think I can make the argument that, that a beeper is as good as you can do.

1:03:32 Michael: Yeah.

1:03:32 RTH: But it, but I *wouldn't* make the argument that the beeper is perfect. I think the beeper has its limitations. And the beeper has this, has the *virtue* of identifying a moment and having that moment be identified by something other than my experience.

1:03:52 Michael: Wait, say that again. I'm not sure I followed it.

1:03:55 RTH: I don't decide which moment is going to be of interest—the beeper decides which one is gonna be of interest. [Michael: Right.] And that's an important deal because what I think is gonna be of interest is gonna shape what moment I was I'm going to choose, which is a, if you're a meditator, you gotta, you gotta know the random samples is shows you what you're, what you're actually doing when you're meditating.

1:04:23 Michael: Right. No, I, I think it's true. I think the randomness is really important. It also tends to show how banal most of our thoughts are. [laughs]. [That's true]. And if we were picking them for discussion, we would've picked highlights. Right?

1:04:37 RTH: That's exactly right.

1:04:38 Michael: Yeah. Okay. Do you wanna do one more? Oh, it's three, it's after three already.

1:04:45 RTH: I, I think it's after three. I think we probably ought to say this is good. I think we've, I think we're, we're accomplishing what we're supposed to be doing here, which from my point of view is *mostly*... Most of the conversation we had today, or a good portion of the conversation we had today, is really about tomorrow or next week.

1:04:59 Michael: Yeah.

1:05:00 RTH: We, we learned some things about today's samples or yesterday's, today's sample.

1:05:04 Michael: Oh, definitely. Each, each day.

1:05:05 RTH: But, but much of our conversation is aimed at calibrating, refining, sharpening, whatever, for next time.

1:05:15 Michael: Great. You wanna schedule another?

1:05:17 RTH: Yeah, let's do that.

1:05:17 Russ comments: They compare calendars.

1:05:24 Michael: Okay, great.

1:06:08 RTH: So I'll put that in the calendar right now.

1:06:11 Michael: I just did. Excellent.

1:06:13 RTH: And, and I will work at the transcript for this one as, as well, trying to get something done by next time. [inaudible]

1:06:25 Michael: Okay, great. I'll take a look at what you sent.

1:06:28 RTH: Alright. So don't hold, don't hold me into anything specific about that.

1:06:30 Michael: I will not, I will not quote you. [RTH: Alright.] Okay. Thank you Russ. Take care. Have a good week.