

Michael D.
Michael D. Interview 0
Instructions for wearing the beeper

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the February 4 interview with Michael that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/mAKKcRKnb9Y>. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt

AB = Agnes Bolinska

Michael = Michael D.

0:00 Russ comments: The comments that I have inserted in the transcript below are intended as commentary about what I think at the time I write the comment, which is generally within a day or so of the interview. They are not to be confused with the Truth with a capital T; there is no guarantee that I will agree with them if I review them at some later time, at which time I might revise or extend them; they are invitations to Michal and/or Agnes to disagree, or to amplify, or to say they don't understand, and so on. If they wish to insert their own comments, they should pick a color other than this green, and then do so. They should also feel free to correct the transcript.

0:01 AB: Hello.

0:02 Michael: Hi, Agnes.

0:04 AB: Hey, Michael.

0:07 RTH: Good morning Michael and Agnes!

0:10 Michael: Good morning.

0:11 AB: Good morning.

0:12 RTH: I'm Russ.

0:14 Michael: Nice to meet you. If this counts as meeting.

0:17 RTH: I think this is as good as we're gonna get for the moment anyway.

0:20 Michael: Yep. [laughs].

0:22 RTH: So is it okay with everybody if I record? And, uh, the rules of the recording is that nobody will do anything with the recording until everybody agrees that we can do something with it.

0:33 Michael: Uh, that's fine by me.

0:34 RTH: Fine with everybody.

0:36 AB: Yep.

0:37 RTH: So I am going to record.

0:37 Russ comments: Turns out the recording had already begun.

0:43 RTH: So now we record. Now I'm recording again.

0:45 Michael: Okay.

0:51 RTH: So this is the first time that we get a chance to meet. We've, we've co corresponded a few times and, uh, have some interesting plans in the, in the mix, but haven't really seen ourselves more-or-less face-to-face

1:05 Michael: In the, no. Um, I've heard your voice before. I listened to a couple podcasts that you were on. [RTH: Mm-hmm.]

1:12 AB: Well, me too [laughs].

1:15 RTH: So the, so maybe we should, we should agree at the outset as to what it is that we're *possibly* doing here, just so that there's no surprises later on. But, but basically I've been doing podcasts and I, and, and particularly I've been putting my descriptive experience sampling work on the web, and, and, and I, and I would sort of like to do that again. I I'm continuing to do that, let's put it that way. And, but I don't wanna do that when, unless everybody thinks this is a good idea. And so, so I would say that from my point of view is a possibility down the road. And, uh, and we came to thinking that maybe we should, we should sample with Michael because he has sent us an article, sent me an article about that he has written about his interest in schizophrenia or experience with schizophrenia. And I thought, well, maybe it'd be a good idea that we should sample with him and see what we find.

2:13 Michael: Okay. Um, that, that's, that all sounds fine to me.

2:17 RTH: And I don't have any, any particular agenda other than what I have stated. I don't, my, my first book was about schizophrenia or sampling...

2:27 Michael: Oh, I didn't know that! I should look at that. [laughs].

2:30 RTH: Yes. When, uh, back in the day, 1990, I guess it was, I, when I, I had been doing some work with beepers and, and was losing interest in, or losing faith in the beeper method that used questionnaires, which is what everybody was, what I had, what I was the pioneer of and everybody else was doing back in that, back in that day. But I had lost sort of faith in that, and I was trying to figure out what something else to

do. And so I was, it was nascent descriptive experience sampling. I don't think I called it that in my 1990 book, but that was the, the beginnings, the beginnings of that. And I thought, well, if there was, I should, I should see whether there's a difference in the inner experience between people who were schizophrenic and people who were not, because that seemed like a, sort of a dramatically different from the *outside* view of inner experience, [Michael: Mm-hmm.] and if you couldn't find the difference in, uh, inner experience between folks like that, then, then maybe there, maybe it wasn't really worthwhile to try to explore this descriptive experience sampling perspective.

3:38 Michael: I see. I see.

3:40 RTH: And so I sampled with a (I forget: four or six or something like that) individuals who were schizophrenic and another three or four or five or something individuals who were not, and to see whether there was something to be seen. And the answer seemed to be Yes. [Michael: Okay.] And so I thought descriptive experience sampling was a worthwhile pursuit. But, but I wasn't at that time, and I'm not now particularly interested in schizophrenia. I'm, I'm, I don't fancy myself a schizophrenia expert. Didn't then, don't now. I, I fancy myself as somebody who's interested in inner experience as inner experience actually is experienced *by anybody*, regardless of whether you call 'em X, Y, or Z or, or whatever.

4:25 Michael: Right. I'm not an expert either, unless you, unless being diagnosed that way makes you an expert. I don't know. [laughs]

4:30 AB: I think it makes you the utmost expert!

4:33 Michael: All right. Well, whatever.

4:35 RTH: [laughs], I, I think, I think it can be, I think it can be the opposite of that, too. I think it, Yes, the utmost ex, expert, but, but the opposite, because Michael would have his own version of [Michael: Of course.] of being Michael and, uh, and how much that is in common with Russ or Agnes or schizophrenics or anybody else, *that* remains to be seen.

5:00 Michael: I certainly don't know the answer to that question! [laughs]

5:03 RTH: Neither. And neither do I. So the, so the goal, ba, basically would be to sample Michael's experience and see whether we can get to Michael's experience *as it is*, regardless of whether it is characteristic of any other group. And, uh, and then maybe we can, maybe we can say something that would be of interest to Michael [Michael: Okay.] or to us, or to anybody, anybody else, but *without*, without presupposing where we're gonna begin about that

5:37 Michael: Good. I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know what presuppositions to make. So that's fine. [laughs].

5:43 RTH: That's good. And, and somewhere in that email you had expressed concern, Michael, that you would, you would find this task difficult and...

5:54 Michael: Uh, yes. I think I will find it difficult, but you assured me that that's okay.

5:59 RTH: Most everybody finds it difficult. Some people find it gets easier as it goes. Some people don't. But either way would be fine with me. I'm,

6:08 Michael: I don't fully know what this task is yet, by the way, but I assume part of this meeting is that you're gonna, you're gonna say.

6:13 RTH: I am. I am. [Michael: Okay. (laughs)]. And, and I would say that part of this meeting is, I'm gonna tell you, I'm gonna tell you what a *first draft* of the task is. [Michael: Okay.] I don't, I don't expect in this meeting to tell you what the whole task is because I don't know what the whole task is. [Michael: Okay.] We've never met before. And so the, the task is going to unfold for both of us. I've been doing this more or less kind of thing for 50 years. So I've got some thoughts about what the task ought to be, I suppose you could say. But, uh, but, but, uh, but, uh, but, but I guess I should say, well, this is the task I've sent you a beeper. You're gonna wear a beeper. The beeper's going to deliver a beep, and when it delivers a beep, you're gonna pay attention to what was, whatever it was that was caught in flight by the beep. [snaps his fingers] And then, [Michael: Okay.] jot down...

7:04 Michael: I, I might have a question about that, but we'll get there when we get there. [RTH: Okay.] Um, I do have the thing [holds up the envelope which had come by FedEx.]

7:10 RTH: The beeper did arrive [inaudible]

7:12 Michael: I haven't actually opened it. I hope, I hope it's in there. [Tears open the package.]

7:15 AB: This is like the big reveal, Michael!

7:17 Michael: This is the, yeah, this is the reveal. We could put this part of the video up. This is the unboxing. Isn't, isn't that a thing that people do on videos?

7:24 RTH: It is [laughs].

7:26 AB: I think that's what people might do on videos. [laughs]

7:26 Michael: Okay. Yes. I have this black box [holds up the beeper]...

7:30 RTH: That's good so far!

7:31 Michael: ...which is number minus 126. [RTH: Okay.] [AB laughs]. Um, and I have, uh, an earbud, [holds it up]

7:39 RTH: Maybe two of them?

7:41 Michael: Uh oh. Yes, there's two of them. [RTH: Okay.] I didn't see that. Yes, two of them. [RTH: Okay.] And a notebook. [holds it up]

7:51 RTH: Well then my secretary, who I gave that stuff to put it all in the same envelope. So I'm, I'm happy to hear about that!

7:56 Michael: Success! [they laugh]

Operation of the beeper

7:59 RTH: So let's start by just turning on the earphone or turn, actually not the earphone, but the box itself. The box has a thumb wheel on the top of it.

8:05 Michael: Okay. Just turn it?

8:07 RTH: Twist, twist that thing and see what, and tell me what happens.

8:12 Michael: It's making an F [laughs]. [sings a beep]

8:15 RTH: Okay, good. So Zoom, we are, we're speaking to each other on Zoom. Zoom is excellent at filtering that kind of stuff out. So I can't hear what the beeper, what the beeper is. Okay.

8:27 Michael: Okay. It's going "beeeep."

8:28 RTH: Good. So now press the white button.

8:30 Michael: Oh wait, I turned it off cuz I got tired of listening to it. Pressed the white button.

8:34 RTH: Turn, turn it back on.

8:35 Michael: I, I did. And now I pressed the white button and it stopped.

8:39 RTH: Good. Alright. [Michael: Okay.] So, so that's, that means that the beeper, the beeper is working. So, [Michael: Okay.] it arrived in, in good shape. That's good. And now what I'd like you to do is to keep it on (and by on, I mean the thumb wheel is, on), and push the white button down and hold it down and tell me what happens. Hold the white button down.

8:57 Michael: It's now it's going intermittent. Boop --- boop --- boop.

9:02 RTH: Good. That's what I call the "square wave," so that the, there's [Michael: Yeah, it's a square wave.] nothing, and then there's a beep and then there's nothing. And then there's a beep and then there's nothing and there's a beep.

9:10 Michael: Oh, alright. But it's also a square wave in the audio sense, I think. It sounds like a square wave.

9:18 RTH: It *is* a square wave.

9:20 Michael: So there's two kinds of square, I mean, you, you were saying on off, on, off, which it was doing. So we agree about that. But I mean, uh, I think that the, when I said "square wave," I meant a combination of, of wave forms that approximate a square. In other words, not a sign wave, not a triangle wave, a square wave. It doesn't matter. I've, I'm sorry. Keep going.

9:49 RTH: So, so I'm, I'm happy to have this conversation, because the beeper actually does create pretty much a square wave at 700 hz.

9:58 Michael: Yeah. It's a, it's an F.

10:00 RTH: [laughs]. It wouldn't surprise me if it's an F. I have an F...

10:04 Michael: It's an, I, I have perfect pitch. It's definitely an F it's actually a slightly sharp F but it's an F that,

10:09 RTH: That I would agree with it. If you, if you said a slightly sharp F, I would've agree, I would agree with that.

10:13 Michael: Okay. That's what, that's what it sounds like. Yeah.

10:13 Russ comments: The frequency is 700 Hz, and the frequency of F is 698.46, so Michael is absolutely correct—the beep is a slightly sharp F that is created by a square wave-form. It is highly unusual for DES participants to recognize either one of those aspects.

10:15 RTH: And it is a, and it is a square wave, slightly sharp F. [Michael: Yes.] That, that is true. Alright,

10:20 Michael: We've, we've settled on that. Okay.

10:23 RTH: Good. And, and so, and, and so I use the term "square wave" in two ways actually. One is when you're holding that white button down and it's through a square wave at about one hertz on for a second and off for a second and on for a second. [Michael: Right. Right.] Maybe, maybe it's half a second or three quarters of a second or something like that.

10:40 Michael: Yeah, yeah.

10:41 RTH: That's a, I guess you could call a low frequency square wave. That's what I *usually* call the square wave. And the other is the 700 hertz beep, which is in fact a square wave.

10:51 Michael: Right. I, I was making that same distinction, but not very clearly, but yes, that's okay.

10:56 RTH: So I would, I would like us to be as clear as possible with each other about what we, what we experience. Because the fact that the, the, the beeper has a computer in it that's putting out signals that are roughly, or pretty much exactly seven hertz, 700

hertz, I think, I forget, I forget exactly. I, I programmed it so I should know, but it's been a while. And, but roughly 700, it is putting out a, it's putting out a square wave. And then, but the, but that gets, that gets operated through the speaker, which is on the, the, uh, box there,

11:31 Michael: Right? Yeah, yeah, it's right there.

11:33 RTH: Which, which un-squares it to some degree [Michael: Yeah. Of course.] because that's physical, physical piece of apparatus.

So what I would like you to recognize also while we're in this process is that if you, if you're holding the white button down with the slow square wave, you can, the thumb wheel will adjust the volume to some degree. So you can turn the volume up and down to, to some degree.

11:57 Michael: Yes. Okay.

11:59 RTH: So that's basically the operating, the operation of the beeper. There's a thumb wheel and there's a button. [Michael: Okay.] And the thumb wheel turns the thing on and off and adjusts the volume, and the button stops the beep when the beep is beeping. [Michael: Okay.] and it puts it into the test mode. The square wave, the slow, one-second square wave is the test mode, basically. [Michael: Okay.] Whenever you wanna know, whenever you wanna know whether the beeper is on, push the white button and hold it down. And if it gives you [Michael: Okay.] gives you that slow, slow, frequent low-frequency square wave. It means I'm on, and you can adjust my volume and you probably will wanna adjust the volume when you get in different environments. So when you're in a

12:36 Michael: Okay, um,

12:37 RTH: A quiet place like a library, a church or something like that, you probably want the volume turned down. And if you're in a louder place like your car or someplace else, you probably want to turn the volume up. And you can always adjust it by pushing down on the white button and uh checking it out.

12:53 Michael: That makes sense.

12:55 RTH: Alright. So now we know how the beeper box works and, and, uh, and from, *but* from now on, I would like us *not* to use the speaker that is, that we've been listening to so far. The onboard speaker, I don't want us... [Michael: Use this. [holds up the earphone] I want us to use the earphone. [Michael: Okay.] And I sent you an earphone, which is designed, I think for your left ear, but I don't really care about that. Okay. You,

13:16 Michael: That's fine. I don't, I don't have a preference.

13:18 RTH: All right. Let's hold it up and let me make, show me the earphone again.

13:22 Michael: There. There's two of them. There's this one that looks like it goes over your ear, and then there's this one that looks like it just goes in your ear.

13:28 RTH: Yeah. So what I've, what I've done is I've sent you two identical earphones, but one of them has a behind-the-ear hook and the other one doesn't. [Michael: Oh, I see that.] But, but you can take that hook off and put it on the other one and they're, they're, they're just squeeze fit on there, so.

13:40 Michael: Got it.

13:41 RTH: So if you, you firmly pull that off, you can put it onto the, put it onto to the other ear.

13:47 Michael: It's fine. Okay. Okay.

13:49 RTH: So the object is to wear that in your left ear [Michael: Mm-hmm.] And, uh, let's make sure that we can put can.

13:57 Michael: Okay. [puts the earphone in his left ear] Yeah. Yeah. Let, let's see.

14:12 RTH: So, so that looks good. And, and, and

14:15 Michael: I can plug it in real quick and just make sure I guess that Yep. It's all good.

14:24 RTH: Okay. All right. So I think you can take that out then. And, and so I, I, I think... So there you're gonna unwind that cord and [Michael: Of course. Yeah. Yeah.] And, uh, and then you're gonna have to figure out, well, how is it convenient to carry that? Some people put the, the box in their pocket and some people clip it to their belt. And some people run the wire for the earphone, the inside their shirt when they're...

14:49 Michael: Oh, okay, that makes sense.

14:49 RTH: ...because the collar of your shirt will hold the wire there, and then the, the, the wire itself won't snag on the doorknob or whatever when you are walking, walking around.

15:00 Michael: Got it. That, that all makes sense.

15:01 RTH: Whatever works, whatever works for you. And, and I would say it's gonna take a while for you to get confident and comfortable about that.

15:09 Michael: So when this is on and it's, and it's, and, and the white button is not being touched, what's happening? Like, in other words, what, so I, so, so it's on, I've got the ear piece in what's gonna happen next?

15:28 RTH: What's gonna happen? So, so let's, let's, let's make sure we understand what the beeper is. Hap what's done. So you turned the beeper on and it came on beeping.

[Michael: Mm-hmm.] You pushed the white button and it stopped the beep.
[Michael: Mm-hmm.] And at that moment, the beeper decided when it's gonna beep again. So the beep [Michael: I see.] the beeper knows when it's gonna beep again.

15:45 Michael: Got it.

15:47 RTH: In a manner of speaking, there's a little bit of doubt about that, but there's, what I said wasn't exactly true, but pretty, pretty darn close. The beeper knows exactly when it's gonna beep again, and then nothing. And, and as far as you're concerned, nothing happens. So the beeper's just sitting there silent, doing nothing. And then when the beeper decides that it's the, it's the time that it had decided whenever it is, then it's gonna beep. [Michael: Got it.] And when it beeps, it's gonna con, it's gonna beep a continuous beep, which is gonna keep going for a long time until you press the white button again. [Michael: Okay.] And when you press the white button again, it's gonna decide, well, I'm gonna beep again. And it knows when it's gonna do that, but you don't, and then it's going to...

16:26 Michael: Okay. That all that all makes sense.

16:28 RTH: And, and,

16:29 Michael: And that just keeps through that process until it's shut, shut off again. Is that correct?

16:31 RTH: Until you shut it off That's right. [Michael: Okay.] Until you shut it off. Except, except there's, there's one, two, there's two exceptions to that. [Michael: Okay.] One is, if you put the thing into the test mode, so you're,

16:43 Michael: When I'm holding it down

16:44 RTH: Yeah. When you're holding it down, that that suspends the operation of the,

16:49 Michael: Okay.

16:50 RTH: When I said the beeper decides when it's gonna beep again, that's not *absolutely* true. What it really has decided is how many cycles it's going to go through until it beeps again. But if you hold the white button down, that suspends the count of the

17:02 Michael: Cycles. Okay. But it, but then when you lift the button back up, it'll just re resume.

17:07 RTH: That's correct.

17:08 Michael: Okay. Okay. Okay.

17:09 RTH: So as far, and, and unless you're gonna hold the button down for minutes, something which you're probably not gonna do, [Michael: Oh, no.] then, then that doesn't really matter. [Michael: Okay.] You're, you're gonna get, uh, the beep is, the

beep is gonna get beep again in a, in sometime between, um, a few seconds actually, and a and an hour from now.

17:31 Michael: Okay.

17:32 RTH: So if, if the thing is turned on right now, it has decided when it's gonna beep, and it's gonna be somewhere between a, a few seconds and an hour from now.

17:39 Michael: Got it.

17:39 RTH: And then when it beeps, it's gonna beep more or less for a long time until you stop the button. Stop the beep by pushing the button.

17:45 Michael: Understood.

17:47 RTH: There's one. So we, we've covered everything about the beeper except one thing. And that is that if the beeper beeps and you *don't* press the button for whatever reason, let's say you've taken the beeper off and set it aside and forgotten to turn it off, you, you meant to turn it off, but you didn't turn it off. Cuz from the outside you really can't tell whether it's on or off. You, you set it aside. And so 29 minutes from now, it decides to beep, but you're not there anymore. And so you don't hear it. It'll beep and it'll continue to beep for a while. And I forget exactly how long a while is, but it's a minute or a couple minutes or something like that. Pretty long time, but not forever. And *then* it goes into the chirp, what I call the "chirp mode." And the chirp mode is sort of like a, like a, like the battery thing on a, on a smoke detector, it'll go chirp. [Michael: Oh yeah.] And then a little while later it'll go chirp again. [Michael: Yep.] And then a little while, well, while later it'll go chirp again. And that's the chirp mode. And what that means is "you set me aside, I beeped, you didn't hear me. And to save my battery, I, I stopped beeping." 'Cuz the b the, the, the beeping is really the only thing that, that uses up the battery. And, uh, so I stopped beeping and went into this chirp mode. And if I go into the chirp mode, then what you're gonna do is you're gonna turn me off. [Michael: Okay.] And when you turn me back on, I'll be back and I'll come back on beeping like I always do. [Michael: Okay.] And you're gonna press my button and then we'll be back in business again. But you *don't* wanna respond to the chirp as if it was a beep, because then you'd get a chirp and then 10 seconds or 15 seconds later, you get another chirp.

19:21 RTH: And that'll be another. [Michael: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] The chirp and the beep are not the same, not the same thing. [Michael: That would keep one very busy. Okay.] That, that would keep one very busy. So you, the object is the, the thing is random and I don't decide when it's going to beep again. And you don't decide when it's gonna beep again, it decides on its own. [Michael: Okay.] And, uh, it, it, it's, it's actually, it's actually you that do it the way that lemme think whether this is really true. I don't think it's really true. Used to, used to be that it was your reaction time that, that got amplified into the random interval. But I don't think that's true anymore. I think forget how I programmed, I think it's a truly random number generator, and there's a little computer, little computer inside that box.

20:06 Michael: It'll, it'll feel random even if it's not truly random.

20:07 RTH: Right. It's, it is, it is very, very approximately, uh, random in a, in a uniform distribution. [Michael: Okay.] So not normally distributed, but uniformly distributed. It's, it's just as likely that you'll get a beep at 59 minutes as you'll get a beep at one minute. [Michael: Got it.] But with the number of beeps that you're gonna get there, you're not gonna, you're not gonna be able to tell. It's gonna be, you're just not gonna be able to predict when, whenever beeps again. [Michael: Right.] So that's the operation of the beeper. [Michael: Okay.] I guess, I guess I wanted to say one more thing. The object of the volume control is for you to have a beep that is quite clearly on [snaps fingers] when it happens, but not so, [Michael: So...] not so loud that it startles you.

20:55 Michael: Okay. So I I, I did notice when I turned it on the first time, it was kinda like whooooo.

21:01 RTH: That'll never happen again.

21:02 Michael: Okay. Okay. Okay.

21:03 RTH: Well, I shouldn't say *never*. That happens the first time you turn the beeper on. [Michael: Okay.] When you, when you turn the beeper on, it's, it has to fill up its capacitors or what, whatever. [Michael: Got it. Makes sense.] And it takes, it takes a little while to do that.

21:15 Michael: And I, I build a little electronic audio things, so I know exactly what you mean.

21:20 RTH: Okay. But af after that, so if you, when, if you remember what the shape of the square wave was, what I call the square wave, that slow frequently square wave mm-hmm. That, that is how the beep is gonna sound. [Michael: Got it.] Like the leading edge of that, y'know, it's not *perfectly* square, it's, but it's pretty darn

21:37 Michael: Un understood. Understood.

21:37 RTH: Pretty darn square. And that's the, that's every beep after the, after the turning-on whoop beep, the, the beeps are all square after that.

21:49 Michael: Okay. Understood. And then, okay, so that's all just the mechanics. So then when it beeps...

21:59 RTH: So what are you going to do when it beeps?

22:01 Michael: ...for real, what happens?

The DES procedure

22:02 RTH: So what I want you to, what I want you to do is to pick a time when you can wear the beeper for three or four hours, which is what it's gonna take you to get a half a

dozen beeps, because these beeps are uniformly distributed [Michael: Right.] from a zero. Like, like, so that means, so

22:17 Michael: So in principle it could take six hours.

22:18 RTH: In principle, it could take six hours, and in principle it could take six minutes. [Michael: Right.] And on average it's gonna take three hours. [Michael: Got it.] And I would like you to wear the beeper sort of at one, at one time, but I don't *much* care about that. Uh, y'know, if you start wearing the beeper and then you say, *oh my God, I can't do that. I've got something that I gotta do. I can't wear the beeper*, well, take it off. There's nothing that's, that says I have to do this at one time. The advantage of doing it all at one time is that that sort of maximizes the likelihood that you'll forget that you're wearing the beeper. [Michael: Right.] If you, if you were to say, I'm gonna get it one beep, then I'm gonna take it off and then I'm gonna put it back on and get another beeper, then I'm gonna take it off, and then I'm gonna put it back on and get another beeper. That would sort of *maximize* the intrusiveness of the beeping process, [Michael: Understood.] when I really wanna minimize the intrusiveness of the beeping process.

23:06 Michael: Understood.

23:07 RTH: I'd **rather** get at your experience without a beeper. But I don't think that's possible. So the beeper is sort of a compromise between intrusive and *laissez faire* or something.

23:17 Michael: Okay. Okay. That makes, that all makes sense.

23:21 RTH: So your task is to put the beeper on, turn it on, get, adjust the volume the way you want it, push the white button to stop the beep, and then go about doing whatever it is that you were gonna do at that time when. And whether that's, y'know, grading homework or washing the car or whatever it is that you're gonna do, shoveling snow or whatever, then, uh, [laughs],

23:42 Michael: We don't shovel snow in these parts, we just wait for it to melt. [laughs] [RTH: Me too.]

23:48 AB: I had to brush off my car the other day, Michael. It was a big deal. Finally got to use my brush!

23:53 Michael: [laughs].

23:55 RTH: So anyway, what I want you to do is to do whatever it is you do until the thing beeps. And when the, when the thing beeps, I want you to try to *freeze* (what I call *freeze*) or pay attention to, or take stock of, or whatever what was ongoing in your experience, right at the very beginning of, of the beep.

24:12 Michael: Okay.

24:12 RTH: And by “the very beginning of the beep,”

24:19 Michael: You mean right before not right, right as

24:20 RTH: [Draws a sketch of a timeline] I mean, I mean, right before, so yeah, if this is, if this is time marching on like this and the thing beeps, and then you push the button and you stop the beep, that that’s time going on. The, the moment that I’m interested in is this one right here. One, I sometimes say “one microsecond just before the beep begins.” [Michael: Okay.] It’s not really a microsecond because we’re not that precise,

24:42 Michael: But, uh, there’s no way we would be that precise. But I understand what you’re saying.

24:45 RTH: Sometimes I call it “the last undisturbed moment just before the beep.” [Michael: Okay.] It’s not really undisturbed because the beeper is, the beeper has happened, but it’s

24:54 Michael: Okay.

24:55 RTH: But what I, what I, what I, what I mean is I’m *not* interested in what, what your reaction to the beep is. And I’m not interested in, in, y’know, you might be startled or something like that, that would happen while the beep is going on. [Michael: Right.] I would like to know about what was going on at this time just before your, before the, the beep enters your environment.

25:17 Michael: Okay.

25:20 RTH: And so the beep happens, you pay attention to what was going on, caught. Sometimes I call caught in flight, I say it’s “caught in flight by the beep.”

25:28 Michael: Mm hmm.

25:29 RTH: And you, and then I would like you to jot down some notes about that or otherwise record some way about that beep. I don’t really care how you, how, how you, how you prepare yourself for talking about this beep. But I think the easiest way is generally to jot down notes. But some people would prefer to, to dictate it to a recorder.

25:53 Michael: No, writing down. No writing is writing down is good. Yeah.

25:57 RTH: But what I, what I would like us to do is, what the *notes* do is sort of keep us honest about this is the, this is the moment that I’m talking about. I’m not talking about any other moment. I’m talking about *this one*. And I’ve taken some notes about that one to remind me, to remind myself that this is the moment that I’m interested in.

26:13 Michael: Okay.

26:13 RTH: Because o, otherwise you'll will forget these things. And then, um,

A philosophical question

26:18 Michael: Can I ask a question about that? [RTH: Sure.] Um, so this may be, I don't mean, I don't mean to be asking a philosophical question [laughs], but maybe it is. Um, it's not obvious yet. And maybe, maybe your answer's just gonna be, "just wait, Michael, be patient!" [laughs] Um, but it's not obvious to me what stretch of time we're talking about here.

26:49 Um, so, so some experiences feel like they're inherently very, like they're very localized. So I dunno if a book falls off the shelf and goes, boom, and then the beeper goes beep then, and, and I heard the, the, the crash of the book on the floor, that's like a very quick thing. And I say, okay, that was right, that was, that was what was happening in experience right before the beep was the crash of the book on the floor. But so, so that seems, feels like a relatively easy case. Maybe you're gonna say No, Michael, that's actually very complicated. And, and that's something we'll learn.

27:26 But my question is: Suppose instead that I, let's say I'm, I'm watching my favorite snooker player play a match. And, and I've been watching that for a while, and right before the beep goes, he makes a long pot across the table and there's all sorts of stuff that's like coloring that experience. Like he's playing against his rival, and he's not been playing well. And then suddenly he makes this amazing shot right at the crucial moment! And it feels like watching that happen isn't just the case of seeing a ball roll across the table and drop in the hole because there's all this like, other baggage that's attached to that experience: He's my favorite player; he wasn't doing well; suddenly he's doing well. All that's part of it. But that, that's a reference to lots of stuff that's been going on for like an hour.

28:16 So I, I assume you don't want me to say here's what's been happening for the last hour [laughs], but it feels, maybe you're gonna tell me I'm wrong about this and I'm happy to be wrong. But it feels like if I just said I saw a red ball fall into a pocket, that also feels like it's not being very faithful to the nature of that particular experience, cuz it wasn't just any old ball or falling into any old pocket. There's all this other meaning that's attached to that particular event. So help me think about how to report that to you, what you want to hear.

28:50 RTH: So I *absolutely* agree with *everything* that you said and maybe especially a part, the, the part about, "well, Michael, be a little patient here!" [laughs],

29:02 Michael: It's not my strong suit! Sorry. [laughs]

29:04 RTH: [they laugh] So I, I, that was a, that was a crude joke that I just made. So, because I didn't mean *especially* that. I meant, I meant that only as *part* of the, part of the deal. Because what, what you said is entirely important and, and it will, and it may turn out to be that it turns that (and this would be the patience part), it may turn out that the beep sort of slices through all of that, and so when the beep happens that you won't have the kind of dilemma that you just described. Or it may be that when the beep happens, you will have that dilemma and it might even be worse than what you have just described it to be. And either one of those is okay with me.

- I don't, I, I don't want us to prejudge how complicated or simple this task is gonna be. [Michael: Okay.] I think that that's part of what we're gonna find out.
- 29:54 Because it *could* be that at the moment of the beep, your experience is about the ball falling into the, the red ball falling into the pocket, and that's all, that really is all there is. And the rest of that stuff is all true background. It is your favorite player. It's been a, it's, he hasn't been playing well. All that stuff is, is somehow the context or the background or whatever. But *at the moment*, your experience has isolated the ball falling into the pocket. *Or maybe it hasn't*. Maybe the ball is falling into the pocket, but your real, your feeling is of relief because now he's finally playing well or, or something like that. [Michael: Okay.] Or it could be that both of those things are equally portioned, equally in your experience.
- 30:41 Michael: So what it feels like, maybe this is correct me if this is not the right way to say it. It feels like the difficulty of the task might be in distinguishing between what am I actually conscious of right before the beep versus how might I reconstruct [laughs] what I was conscious of right before the beep. And that reconstruction could include all kinds of stuff that wasn't actually in consciousness at the time. It's just stuff that I *know* is true. And I somehow put that into the story even though it's not part of like what I'm directly experiencing at the time. Maybe that wasn't very clear, but...
- 31:24 RTH: So what I, what I think what I think is that if, if you take the rich version of your question there, that, that goes on without in, because it's not only about your snooker player, but it's also about the weather and President Trump and Vietnam and...
- 31:42 Michael: Right. Okay.
- 31:45 RTH: All, all of that stuff (in, in some important or not important or marginally important way) colors your experience of the ball falling into the pocket.
- 31:54 Michael: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
- 31:56 RTH: But some of those things are more salient at the moment, and some of them are less salient at the moment, I think. I think we might find that out. Or maybe, maybe for you they're not! [Michael: Yeah.] Maybe all those things, all those things are, [Michael: That seems plausible.] are there.
- 32:08 What I, what I think the difference is (and this is, this is sort of a different way of answering your question), I think the, the, the difference is the introspective (if you wanna call it that) task that I've, that that I'm supposing that we're going to do here, propos, proposing that we're going to do here, is that the moment of under consideration is being chosen by a random device, *not Michael*. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] But the discussion that Michael has been having now for the last minute or two minutes, or however long this, this discussion has been, has been about, well, I'm thinking about introspection when I'm trying to think about what it's like when, when the moment under consideration [Michael: Okay.] is the moment selected by Michael. [Michael: Right.] What would, what would I, what would it be like if I were playing pool or watching, watching my snooker play or whatever? [Michael: Right.] That, that is an *internally generated* beginning, whereas the beeper is an *externally*

generated beginning. And that might [Michael: Okay. I think yeah.] That might turn out to be a very, might make the task very easy, and it might not make the task very easy. I don't want to presume it either way. [Michael: Okay.] I want to take, I want to take the concerns seriously, I think because I think they *are*, but, but I think it, I, I think at least, at least for some, some people, maybe most people, but not necessarily *Michael*, the, the externality of the beep finds that you have been particularly interested in one thing.

33:49 Michael: Okay. That was a very nice way of saying, wait and see what happens. Uh, uh, [laughs]. Okay.

33:54 RTH: Right. *And*, and it, it, it's, it's, it's slightly more than that. It's partly wait and see what happens. And it's partly, let's keep this conversation going, [Michael: Mm-hmm.] because it's a fundamentally important part of the conversation. And, and I would like us to come to some kind of an understanding about the way it *is for Michael* at beeps because this conversation *might be* at the heart of what, what we're interested in or might not, might not be relevant at all or anywhere in between. And, uh,

34:30 Michael: Okay. Um, And, and there's, there's one

34:33 RTH: [interrupts] So, so lemme, lemme say just one more thing about that [Michael: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.] So what I'm, uh, uh, the whole process is what I call *iterative*, which means it's, it's gonna be, the first day is gonna be sort of an approximation of, of this. And then we're gonna get some experience of talking to each other. And you're gonna ask me, "well, is this part of this experience?" And, and we're gonna have a conversation about that. [Michael: Okay.] And then we're gonna refine our appreciation for that. *Or we're not*. One of the two. We're gonna, we're gonna either, we're gonna, we're gonna see what happens when we try to refine our appreciation. Maybe we'll be able to, and maybe we won't. And then the second day, second sampling day, we'll be informed by the conversations that we had on the first day.

35:15 Michael: Okay. That's, that's very helpful actually. Okay.

35:20 RTH: And so the, we we're gonna have to, we're gonna have to figure this out. And, and, and it's not like I'm, I'm, I'm being what I, what I would call being honestly Socratic here. It's not like I know the answer and I'm trying to get you to give me the answer. That's what, y'know, the law school students think about the Socratic method, which I don't think had anything to do with Socrates. [Michael: Right.] I, I think Socrates didn't know.

35:42 Michael: I agree with that a hundred percent.

35:44 RTH: I think Socrates didn't know and *said* he didn't know and was, [Michael: Agreed.] was interested in trying to figure things out. And that's, and so I feel like this is sort of an honestly Socratic method, [Michael: Okay.] if, if you're, if you buy that distinction.

35:57 Michael: I buy it, I buy it a hundred percent.

What to do about the time I meditate?

36:00 Michael: [continues] Um, I have a separate question, maybe a little bit more practical. Um, and I actually, I have a, I have a thousand questions, but I'm gonna leave 998 of them to the side. Um, and for now [laughs]. Um, but my other question that I wanna ask, so I spend half an hour, 45 minutes, sometimes up to an hour a day, uh, doing a kind of meditation. Um, this has actually been in my life far more effective than medications have been, um, helping with various symptoms, whatnot. And during that time, I mean, the idea is that, that that will have some carryover effect into like the rest of the day. But during that time, *especially*, there's a great deal of like, it's all about being aware of what you're aware of, [laughs], y'know, so, y'know, paying attention to your own conscious experience, um, in a kind of meta, so there's a kind of meta consciousness about one's consciousness or however you wanna put it, I dunno [RTH: Okay.]

37:06 Um, and my question is, so, so that's a very different, the hope is that that carries out through the rest of the day and you can sort of maintain a kind of awareness of what's going on. Because for me, that helps a lot with various things that were very troubling to me in my twenties and thirties. Um, but it's especially marked and intense during that period where I'm like purposefully, intentionally engaging in the kind of a meditative practice. And my question is, is that a bad time to have the beeper on? Or a good time to have the beeper on? Or does it not matter? Just...

37:45 RTH: Or all of the above or, I don't know. [Michael: Okay.] And, and so what I, I would say is it sounds like that would be an interesting time to wear the beeper, but it might not be the most interesting time to wear the beeper *at first*, but I don't really know about that. [Michael: Okay.] So I'm, I'm a, I'm a believer in randomness. And the [Michael: Okay.] And, and what a, what a "believer in randomness" means is I don't presume to know when the best time to wear the beeper is.

38:20 Michael: Okay. [RTH: And, uh...] Alright. I just, I've devised a plan then. [RTH: Okay.] I, I'll, I I'm, I'm on board with the randomness thing.

38:29 RTH: Okay.

38:29 Michael: So we'll find out. Well, you and I'll find out together whether I wear the beeper during that time!

38:35 RTH: Perfect! And, and, and, and, and I would say about that is we're the be the method that we're embarking on is not really gonna get at the essence of Michael, [Michael: Mm-hmm.] as if there were such a thing, which maybe there is, and maybe they're not. I'm agnos, agnostic about that. But the, we're, we're only gonna, we're only gonna get what the, what the moments that Michael happens to be wearing a beeper or chooses to wear the beeper or whatever. And, and Michael is more, much

more the expert about that than Russ is or Agnes is. And uh, and so we're, we're gonna get a guided tour into some randomly chosen moments that Michael selects.

39:18 Michael: Okay. I hope you're ready! [laughs]

39:19 RTH: He doesn't select the moments, but he selects the epochs, I guess you would say, [Michael: Yeah. Right.] that the moments are within.

Michael can decline to describe an experience

39:26 RTH: [continues] And, and I guess I would, that brings me to another thing that I probably should have said already, but I'll say now cuz I forgot to say it earlier. And that is, if a, if the beep were to occur at a time when you don't want to tell us about what's going on with that, you should say "the beep occurred at a time when, I don't wanna tell you what's going on with that," and, and we will honor that. [Michael: Okay.] The, we, I recognize that your experience is your private property, abso, *absolutely* your private property. And I have, and Agnes has, and nobody else has any right at all to that. If you would like to tell us about that, then I would like to hear about it. But the, but, but you've got control about that.

40:09 I *would* like us, I, I would recommend, let's put it this way, and even, and even this is partially up for grabs, but I would *recommend* that if a beep occurs and there's some piece of it that, uh, that is, that you don't want to tell us about, then you, let's just skip the whole beep because I'm gonna be asking questions until I feel like I've sort of understood the whole experience. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] And if you're holding back some piece of it, I'm gonna have some sense that I haven't gotten the whole thing it, [Michael: Got it.] and then I'm gonna keep asking them. But, but e but even that, y'know, maybe there's something that, that, that you're not *yet* ready to tell, but the rest of it is or something. And we'll figure that out as we go.

40:50 Michael: Okay. I, I don't anticipate that being an issue, but I understand and I appreciate that you said that.

40:56 RTH: The whole, the whole thing about, I, I don't, I don't actually feel strongly about anything other than two things actually that we, that we, that the interesting thing is about what Michael's experience *is really like*, and, and, and so whatever we can do to do that is *good* as far as I'm concerned. And, and the other thing, the other thing that I feel fairly strongly about is that the beeper in your ear is better than the beeper on the, in the, on the onboard speaker.

41:27 Michael: Oh, that makes total sense.

41:28 RTH: I do want you to, I do want you to use the earphone

41:31 Michael: I, that, that makes total sense. Yeah.

41:34 RTH: And the only reason for that is that if the, the, if we inject the sound directly into your ear, there's, it pretty clearly defines the moment, whereas [Michael: Right.] if

the beeper is over there and Is that the beep? Is that the beep? Is that the beep? Is that the...

41:46 Michael: Well Russ, uh, I, I probably not, this probably won't be surprising to you, but, but I live in a very noisy world. [laughs] Um, and if the beep was in the environment, uh, it could easily just go ignored, um, because of whatever else, real or imagined or whatever, however you wanna think about, it is going on. But if it's in my ear, I'll know that it's, I'll know that that's the beep. [RTH: Okay.] Like, I won't confuse that with whatever else.

42:18 RTH: Okay. And, and, and I would, I would say about that is that I don't presume even to know what the beep sounds like to you. So for, for example, we've, we've already established that your, your process, your auditory processing the beep is different from most people. Most people aren't gonna say this is a F sharp, a sharp F square wave mo Most people do not do, most people do not do that. [Michael: Okay.] And, and, and I have said that the beep has a, a rapid rise time that's true in the physical world, but it might not be true in your experiential world. So the beep might, the beep might swoooooop up for you.

43:01 Michael: Uh, well it did when I turned it on, but you said that was normal when it, when it was in the test mode, that was, that the onsets were sharp.

43:08 RTH: Okay, well that's, that's good. But that doesn't necessarily mean that it will continue to be that way in the, in the natural environment. [Michael: Sure.] This is sort of the special, special case. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] So, so I wouldn't, what what I, what I'm really saying is everything is up for grabs. Uh, and we're, we're gonna, our aim here is to try to get at Michael's experience as Michael experiences it at a, at some randomly selected moments. Everything else, y'know, I sometimes say if I have to stand on my head in the corner to have these inter interviews, if that's what it takes to, to help Michael talk about his inner experience, then I'll stand in my head in the corner or whatever. Well,

43:46 Michael: We, we'll, we won't make you do that.

43:48 RTH: Well that's good! But, but the, but, but the point, the point is the, there's nothing magical about the beeper. I think there is, there's some quite useful approximations in the beeper, but maybe they work for you, maybe they don't. Well, okay, that's, we're gonna find that out.

44:07 Michael: Okay.

44:10 RTH: So the big picture is: we're gonna decide when we're gonna meet again. [Michael: Right.] Let, why don't we, why don't we do that? Let's decide when we're...

44:17 Michael: Gonna get my calendar here.

They compare calendars

46:54 RTH: I got the time zone straight, but,

46:56 Michael: Okay. So 1:30 eastern time works for us.

47:00 RTH: Okay. So, so we're gonna, we're gonna meet again at 1:30 on, on Friday. And what that means is (and this is why I wanted to pick the time first), uh, the, I want you to wear the beeper in the sort of 24 hour window before the next time we meet. So we're gonna meet, [Michael: That's not a problem.] So I, you should be wearing the beepers sometime on Thursday or Friday morning. And by "24 hours," what I really mean is you, you can sleep on the beeps once, but if you sleep on the beeps twice, then the beeps then, then they're sort of harder to remember.

47:30 Michael: Okay. I can do it Friday, Friday morning.

47:32 RTH: Anytime, anytime on Thursday or Friday morning. But you're gonna need to wear it for three or four hours,

47:38 Michael: Right? I can do it Friday morning. I have a, I have a zoom meeting Friday morning that I'd be *happy* to be disrupted from, so, [RTH: Okay.] um, [laughs] that's fine.

47:48 RTH: So you're gonna, so you're gonna wear the beeper for a three or four-ish hour window on Friday morning the 6th and for, and get a half a dozen beeps. And when you got a half a dozen beeps, you're done. So if they happen sooner, we're, I don't think we're gonna have as a there, there's nothing magic about the number "half a dozen" either, except that usually that's about as many as we can talk about it an hour. [Michael: Okay.] And, uh, so get a, get us a half a dozen beeps and, and, and there's nothing magic if, y'know, if we only get five, that's fine too. Y'know, [Michael: Okay.] on the first, first sampling day, very often we don't get through all six or five or [Michael: Okay.] It depends. Sometimes people are easy and sometimes they're not. We'll, we'll find out about that. And, and your task is to sort of fairly early on on Friday, put the beeper in your ear, put the earphone in your pocket, put the, put the notebook in your pocket and a writing tool.

48:43 And, and then when the thing beeps, jot down some, some notes. And the, the notes are between you and you. I'm never gonna ask to see the notes, probably. Maybe sometime that we can have a conversation about why, why that might be a good idea. But, but I *don't* want you to be crafting the notes so that this is what Russ [Michael: Right.] or Agnes would make sense. The notes are, the notes are for *you* to jog *your* memory, remind *you* of what was happening at the moment of the beep. [Michael: Okay.] And, and so I don't, so and so I don't care what you write in that some people wanna draw a picture. Some people wanna write one word, some people wanna write a whole page. Some people,

49:28 Michael: Okay, I guess we'll have to wait and see how that goes. I, I don't have any idea.

49:32 RTH: That's, that's exactly right. And, and, and...

49:36 Michael: But I'd be happy to share them cuz you won't be able to read my writing! [they laugh]

49:42 RTH: What, what I, what I *don't* want is the notes to be, uh, in, interference. The what I, what I, what I want is what I, what I would like is to be inside Michael's experience at 9:07:32 or whenever the beep beeps on Friday morning.

50:01 Michael: Do you need the time?

50:02 RTH: I don't.

50:03 Michael: Okay.

50:04 RTH: If it's, if it's convenient for you to write down the time, write it down, but I don't really care about it. [Michael: Okay.] What I, what I *don't* want is *anything* in the, about the process to get in the way of you are telling us about your experience. [Michael: Okay.] The notes are a tool, and as if the tool helps, fine. If the tool doesn't help, well then we'll have to figure out some way. So I, for example, I have a sample with people who are kids and adults with, with, with, uh, dementia where I sit in their house, basically, or sit in their driveway or whatever, and when they think beeps, we talk about it right then so that we don't have to write things down, right? And so I'm, everything is, everything procedural is in the service of trying to get a high-fidelity glimpse into a moment of Michael's experience, [Michael: Okay.] or experience that was going on at the moment. [Michael: Right.] And as you say, I'm not, the, the, the experience itself doesn't have to be short. The experience could be a minute or 10 minutes or whatever long. [Michael: Okay.] It just has to be *at the* moment. [Michael: Right.] I'm not talking about a moment of experience. I'm talking about experience that was at the moment that the beep.

51:15 Michael: That's a very helpful distinction actually. Okay. Alright. Well, um, I think I, I'm not gonna ask the other 998 questions right now. Um, I think they'll get answered as we go, maybe. Um,

51:33 RTH: It... yeah,

51:34 Michael: It makes more sense to just try it and see what happens, I think.

51:40 RTH: I don't, that, that's part of, part of what I think I don't have, I don't have the right answer to. I, I would like to answer any questions that you think would be helpful to have answered, but I also think you're right. I'm, I also think trying it is the best way to...

51:57 Michael: Yeah. Let's, let's, let's hold off on other... I, I, the main questions I've asked. And that's, I think that's enough to get started and I think it would be more efficient to just do it one time and then see what questions remain.

52:13 RTH: Okay. And, and I think you're right about that. In, in general, I think it's not possible to answer the, on any question of all those 999 questions that you've got, it's, I probably can't answer any of them. [Michael: Okay. (laughs)] Except to say, well, we

gotta try it and see, and then maybe, we'll, maybe we'll figure that out. That doesn't mean question,

52:30 Michael: Right. Well, the two I asked you answered, but Okay.

52:32 RTH: Doesn't mean that the questions aren't important. Just means,

52:36 Michael: Okay.

52:38 RTH: I, I think what I, what I, I really think in my bones is basically there's *a very big* difference between having *a beeper* select a moment and having *Michael* select the moment.

52:52 Michael: Mm hmm.

52:52 RTH: And that's, that's a, a fundamentally different, different deal.

53:01 Michael: Yeah. Yep. So I'll just tell you now, then maybe this will be helpful information, and maybe I said this in the email earlier. So the, the experience of telling somebody [laughs] about my experience, that's something I've done a lot, but not in this context and not, and not in the way that you're hoping for. Um, because that's done, y'know, in, in a psychiatrist's office, in a situation where, y'know, after a, after a few dramatic failures, you learn to try to manage the other person's interpretation of what you're saying [laughs]. And I understand that that's *not* the task here. Um, and I've been thinking a lot about like, how can I do this in a way that does not involve me trying to manage your interpretation of what I say. Um, and my way of approaching that for now. But, y'know, maybe this will evolve and, and maybe you'll correct me or whatever, is to try to say, try to make zero preparatory remarks [laughs], and just say in as direct a possible way, *this is what was in my mind at the time*, um, without providing a ton of context or trying to manage your interpretation of what I'm saying.

54:33 And I'm saying that out loud right now so that you and or Agnes can say, "Michael, it sounds like you're trying to manage our interpretation." And I'm open to being told that [laughs], cuz I'm actively trying not to do that. Um, so that's what, so my only reason for saying it right now is to say, if you think that's going on, it might be, and you should say, "Stop doing that, Michael!" and I'm open to being told that.

54:59 RTH: So what I think about that is that I think everybody's trying to manage my,

55:03 Michael: I know, I, I know that's not some people than I'm aware of that general fact. And of course it's true in our every, everyday environment. The problem I'm facing is that this is structurally very similar to what happens. Y'know, there's a guy with a PhD asking questions about my experience. That's what I'm saying. That's, that's not an everyday kind of thing. [RTH: I, I agree, I agree with that.] But it is the thing that I've experienced myself many times that, but I've experienced it and participated in a way that's *not* what you want. And so that, that's why I, that's why I have a special concern about this. Not because I don't think that's what we're all doing, all doing

all the time, but because this scenario is very much like [laughs] the scenario in which a, a switch turns on somewhere right around here that says, Michael, be careful what you say and tell this person how they're supposed to interpret what you say.

56:01 RTH: So what I would, what I would say about that is (a) I guess I dunno whether it is good for Michael to turn that switch on or off for me or Agnes or anybody, anybody else. I'm not presuming to know the answer to whether that's a good thing or not. [Michael: Okay.] What I, what I do... And, and I, I certainly don't want Michael to pretend that he trusts me or, or whatever. There, there's, he's got no reason to trust me. He may, he may *learn* to trust me or he may learn *not* to trust me, that that will be up to Michael. And, and the switch going on and off might be affected by the degree to which Michael thinks I'm trustworthy or Agnes and I are trustworthy.

56:51 Michael: Well, I'm going into this trying to be trustful. I trust Agnes. I already know Agnes, I trust Agnes. Um, and I, I don't know you Russ, but I but you seem like a trustworthy guy with good intentions. [laughs]

57:04 RTH: Yeah. And, and I, and, and I'm, I'm agreeing that I probably am! But, but I, but I, part of the reason that I think that the method has to be iterative (and by iterative I mean we're gonna get better at maybe across time) is that part of, part of the, part of the essential part of the method is you've gotta figure out whether I can understand what you're saying [Michael: Mm-hmm.] and whether you, whether it's worth your effort to try to help me understand it. Cuz it's, it, it might very well be difficult, difficult for me. And you may decide, well, Hurlburt's a, he, he's too blunt or too something or other. He can't, he can't track my ex, experiences or whatever. Or, or Agnes can't, or whatever. That that's, that's part of what, what has to evolve, I think. [Michael: That's fair.] It could very well be, and, and, and when I, when I I, when I said everybody's managing their experience, I, I think that's true. But, but I think it varies the extent to which people do that, it varies probably greatly from one person to the next [Michael: Mm-hmm.] But that's, but what, what I'm, but what I was trying to say about that is that I, I, that's sort of my job is to deal with that and ...

58:25 Michael: Right. Okay, well, we'll let you do your job!

Agnes's role

58:27 RTH: And, and when, and I, I guess I would, I would, I would, I do want to have a little conversation with Agnes here because we haven't talked about what her role is. [Michael: Yes.] So I, I would think, I *think* (no Subjunctives about it) I *think* that Agnes should consider herself a participant, which means that Agnes should ask whatever she wants to ask, say whatever she wants to say, whenever she wants to say it. And, uh, and if that means that Agnes would prefer to be a fly on the wall and watch, that would be okay with me. And if she would like to have a more active role in asking of the questions or trying to understand what, what's going on. I think, I think that's a negotiation between Agnes and Michael and Russ. And

59:26 Michael: So that raises, I guess that raises a practical question. Um, I, I think I can predict your answer at this point, given the way you've answered all the other questions, but I'm gonna ask it anyway. Um, so Agnes and I see each other quite a lot. Do we talk about this outside of these meetings or not?

59:43 AB: Is it like psych club? [laughs]

59:45 Michael: [laughs]?

59:51 RTH: So I'm guessing you're predicting my answer is gonna be something like, *well, I don't really know*. [Michael: Yes.] And, and the, and the answer to that is I don't really know the answer to that. So,

1:00:03 Michael: But you might have a, you might have a preference at, at least initially. ...Oh, I think Russ just froze. Oh, there, it's,

1:00:13 RTH: I didn't, I didn't, I, I froze, but [laughs] can't blame, can't blame Zoom for that!

1:00:18 Michael: Okay, I gotcha. [they laugh]

1:00:21 RTH: So what I, what I think is that, that's just too complicated a question for me to be able to figure out. I would like, I, I would like in my own prurient kind of way, I suppose, to know exactly what happens and if you all are talking amongst yourselves and not with me...

1:00:35 Michael: Well, let's do it this way...

1:00:35 RTH: [interrupts]...*but*, but, but I think that the overriding that is, I, I fully accept that Michael and Agnes know things and do things that I don't know, I don't know about, and, and I don't, and I don't wanna *meddle* in that. So I don't, I don't want to inter, I don't want to interfere in that.

1:01:00 Michael: Well, I think maybe, maybe we'll say Agnes, at least for this first time, we'll, we'll keep the conversation limited to this meeting and then maybe, we'll, it'll, we'll have a better sense of whether it would be constructive or destructive or neither. [AG: I mean...] to chat about it outside.

1:01:18 AB: Here's what, here's what I think. I mean, I'm not personally, I mean, Russ correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm not too worried about us talking about it or not because it seems like what the three of us are doing is unpacking your experience, Michael, with the beeper. And I don't foresee you and I doing that independently. Like I don't foresee....

1:01:40 Michael: No, that's not what I meant. Yeah.

1:01:42 AB: ...having... Us to meet a meeting and then me asking you further questions about your experience, if anything, I foresee us talking about what the experience of having the meeting was, which I don't see as interfering with this process itself.

1:01:58 Michael: Okay. Yeah, that seems right.

1:02:00 RTH: So what I, what I would, what I would say about *that* is: if we, if we, if we project into the future and imagine that we're gonna put something on the web and about, about, about this, which, which in, in my way of thinking is usually the whole deal, the, the, an interested observer probably would find the conversations that Agnes and Michael have of interest. And if Michael and Agnes have those conversations amongst themselves, then they will siphon off some of the energy that would be in that conversation that would be of interest to somebody else.

1:02:45 Michael: That makes sense.

1:02:46 RTH: Uh, that, that, that *foregrounds* the sort of the philosophical context of, of these meetings, rather than the foregrounding, the, well, *let's see whether we can get Michael's experience right*. And, and I'm just not smart enough to know which of those is the more important deal. I don't, I don't think that's possible.

1:03:10 Michael: All right, well, let's just, we'll just go forward and see what happens. Anyway, I didn't mean to interrupt. Sorry. You were, you were discussing with Agnes. I didn't know if you finished that or not, um, before I jumped in there. Sorry about that.

1:03:24 RTH: Well, the, I I, I think probably should go without saying, but I should say it anyway, that, that we should, we should, we should adopt the view that Michael's experience is *his* property and that Agnes does not have permission to talk about that with anybody other than Russ and Michael, and *not* with Russ *by himself*. That is, we can, we can, and we can have, we can have a conversation about, about what we're doing here with, amongst the three of us, but Agnes and I should not plot what we should do or whatever. [they laugh] And Agnes should *not* feel free to say, "oh, you should hear what..." (to, to a friend at coffee or whatever) "You should hear what Michael said" or whatever. She should not, she should not do that *until* such time as Michael says, it's okay for Agnes to talk about what this experience was like. And *if*, if at some time Michael chooses to say, then, then Agnes should be able to say to whomever, whatever she wants to say.

1:04:39 Michael: Sure. That, that all makes sense.

1:04:41 AB: Can I ask, um, a practical question just about how the process will unfold next during our next meeting? Um, you mentioned that I could participate in whatever way I want, and of course, y'know, time will tell. But without having done it before, I would like to participate because I think it's interesting, like I would like to participate *actively*. Um, but of course I have not done this before, whereas you've done it a lot. And so I'm just kind of curious how, how that unfolds in practice, right? Like, um, like what, what the structure of the conversation is. Is it just like an open-

ended conversation where the three of us are in a Zoom room or whatever and it unfolds as it does? Or is there some, or is it more structured in any way?

1:05:35 RTH: It's both. It's both.

1:05:36 AB: I, yeah. And like, can I, how can I participate? Because I think just knowing myself and knowing this context, um, if the structure were just kind of like open-ended, I could foresee myself just not really deferring to you to ask all the questions because *who am I?* Um, but I would like to be involved. So yeah.

1:06:02 RTH: So the structure of the meeting will be: "Hello Michael. What was in your experience at the moment of the first beep?" And then Michael will say, "Well, this is what was going on in in that." And I will say, "I don't understand exactly what you meant. Can you tell me more about this aspect about it or that aspect about it? Or did you mean this or whatever?" And, and I, I will engage Michael in a conversation *about that particular beep* in a, in a way, in a way that is trying to unfold in Russ's imagination what Michael's experience was at the moment of the beep. And I *presume* that Agnes will be tracking along with that and trying to unfold in *her* imagination what that experience is was like for Michael. And, and Agnes, being different from Russ, will have different sensitivities and proclivities and experiences and whatever to bring to bear about this. And the kinds of things that Russ would think to, to differentiate and about this would not be the kinds of things that Agnes would think of and vice versa.

1:07:05 And, and if, if we get to a place where Agnes is inspired to say, "well, y'know, I don't understand what's going on about *that*, tell me more about that," then I, I think Agnes should feel free to do that. And she *shouldn't*, she shouldn't feel like she has to ask permission to do that. She should do it. She should ask whatever she should say or ask whatever. And *Russ* should say, if he thinks that what Agnes has said is a bad question, Russ should say, "I think that's a, i I don't think that's a good question. And here's why." Then Russ and Agnes will have to have a discussion about that. And uh, and out of that will probably come a refinement of the question to help Michael answer the question that Russ thinks that Agnes really wanted to ask but was screwing it up somehow. Somehow that, so I think [his phone beeps] sorry about that. I think, I think we will, we, we will have, we will, we will figure that out.

1:08:10 And Agnes, I think, shouldn't be shy about it and Russ should be happy to have her asking questions because she's got a different perspective than he's got. And he might learn something from it, from her, her perspective on Michael's experience that it wouldn't have, wouldn't have occurred to him. And, and, *and* the conversation about whether it's whether something that Agnes asked or that Russ asked (either way) is a good question, is a fair question, is a question that helps Michael describe his experience or, or, or makes it more difficult for him. That should be fair game of the interview. And Michael should have an opinion about that. So, so if Agnes asks a question and Russ says, "I think that's a crappy question," and Michael says, "No, I thought that was a good question," we should be able to have that, that that discussion because really the, Russ doesn't know what a good question is. The, the only the only good questions are the questions that allow Michael to transmit characteristics of his experience to Russ and Agnes, and Russ is

an idiot if he thinks he knows all, all the answers to that. And I don't, I don't think I do.

1:09:33 AB: That makes sense. Yeah.

1:09:36 RTH: So another another way to think of it. I, I think we should think about it as three adults trying to figure out what we want to, what we can do and, and, uh, negotiating with each other about how, how to do it. And not that Russ knows the answers to these questions. Russ should not be held to be the final arbiter of, of this process, cuz he's not, he has a lot of experience. I I I'm not denying that. I've asked a lot of questions, a lot of, a lot of different people, but I've never asked questions *of Michael* and I've never had **Agnes's help**. So it's a new, a new deal,

1:10:21 Michael: But more new for you than it is more new for us than it is for you.

1:10:24 RTH: Probably. Let's, let's,

1:10:26 Michael: Let's acknowledge that.

1:10:29 AB: I think it goes without saying.

1:10:31 Michael: Yeah. Well, it, it does go without saying, but I said it anyway. Um,

1:10:34 RTH: So what I, what I, what I, what I would, what I would say about that is while that that is likely true in a, in *one* manner of speaking, it might be the opposite of that is true in *another* manner of speaking because, well most... Let's put it this way: most people who fancy themselves to be experts about something are more enamored of their own expertise than they are of the, and, and so a little naivete is a good idea. So I, so I, I don't, I don't, I I, I think,

1:11:19 Michael: What's the famous study? There was some study that was done at some aeronautics school that, that gives its name to this phenomenon of experts thinking they know more than they know. Oh,

1:11:30 RTH: I know what you're, I know what you're talking about. It's, um,

1:11:33 Michael: I can't remember now, but there was some study at some, at some at Aeronautic school that, oh gosh, now I'm gonna have to go look that up after we're done.

1:11:43 RTH: Yeah. Me too. [laughs]. I,

1:11:48 Michael: Anyway, we don't have to answer that right now. [laughs]

1:11:48 Russ comments: Russ and Michael agreed by email after the interview that the effect Michael refers to is the Dunning-Kruger effect.

1:11:51 RTH: So what we're, what we're agreement, what we're agreeing here is that at 10:30 my time, 1:30 your time on February the sixth, Michael is gonna have a worn the

beeper, and we're gonna get together and we're gonna talk about it, and we're gonna see what happens. And, and out of that is gonna come the primary out of that, the primary *result* of that is gonna be, we're gonna figure out how to do it better the next time. [Michael: Okay.] And, uh, um, and, and then we'll do next time

1:12:19 Michael: Alright. I have the notebook.

1:12:24 RTH: Alright. Sounds like a plan.

1:12:25 Michael: Thank you.

1:12:27 RTH: Thank you See you all on Friday, and I will, I will send a calendar invite right now. Okay. Sounds good. All right. See you.

1:12:36 AB: See you then.