

Michael D.
Michael D. Interview 3
Sampling Day 3

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the February 12 interview with Michael that is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/Oym1fkiF_fc. 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 Michael 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 RTH: So this is gonna be Michael's third day at this. And I think we agreed that we would try to focus somewhat more on Michael's experiences rather than the discursions / excursions, whatever that we've had about the, the, uh, process and that in a couple of hours after this is done, I will send to Agnes a video of this with a stopwatch on it as I usually do, and I'll, and a way of converting the stopwatch time into clock time. So if Agnes has a question about something that happened and she can look at her computer and it says it happens at 4: 07 or whatever, she can keep track of that and then she can go back and look at the, the, uh, video if she wants and figure out what the question was and write it down and I send it to me and I will answer it.
- 0:57 AB: Sounds good.
- 0:58 Michael: Sounds good.
- 1:00 RTH: And we'll see how that works. That's, uh, if it doesn't work, then we'll, we'll try something else, but....
- 1:06 Michael: It's fine. You're, you're, it's part of the occupational hazard of talking to philosophers, I think.
- 1:13 RTH: I, I, I would say that's probably true. But, but I think, I think, I think that's an important part of the c part of the, our interaction here. Our interaction *is*, and to

some degree what, what triggered this whole thing in the first place was some kind of a po, potential conversation among philosophers. Not just two or three of us, but, uh,

1:34 Michael: Yes, indeed.

1:36 RTH: So

1:38 AB: It's gonna happen!

1:40 Michael: It's gonna happen. [laughs]

1:41 RTH: Life is complicated and, and, and like my and most things in the life, it's not just one thing at a time. It's [Michael: Right.] several, several things. [Michael: Correct.] So anything else we should be talking about before we look at beep 1?

1:55 AB: I don't think so. I'm good.

1:57 Michael: Nope, I'm good.

1:58 RTH: And I am recording and I'm going to say that right now in this recording, it is 3:03 in Eastern time. [Michael: Okay.] And that will allow us to figure out where to stopwatch goes from here. Okay. Um, number 1.

1:58 Russ comments: It's really 4:03pm Eastern time.

2:15 Michael: Alright. Number 1. Well see, last time Russ said the word epoché, which lit a candle for me. Um, so we're going all in on epoché today. [laughs]

2:28 RTH: Okay.

2:30 Michael: Um, that should be, that should be the name of a newsletter, like the newsletter of the American Society of Phenomenology. *Epoché Today*. I would read that! [AB laughs]

2:40 RTH: That'd be good!

Sample 3.1 discussion starts here

2:42 Michael: All right. Sorry. Distraction. Um, okay. Number 1. Um, yeah. Okay. Um, so I would say this was like 25% visual. Very vaguely, the, the, the, the, the what's in my visual field is a pot of oatmeal being stirred by me. And it's like 25% just feeling the oatmeal, being stirred with a spoon, kind of testing to see if it's getting done. And 50% nothing. There was a lot of nothing going on in this one. I was mostly out to lunch during oatmeal.

3:26 RTH: And does that mean that there is, there is the direct experience of nothing? Or is it just that I'm, I'm involved with an oatmeal and that's it?

- 3:37 Michael: No, I think it's the direct, I don't think there was direct experience. It was really when the beep went off, I, I kind of said to myself, "oh, there wasn't much going on upstairs." [RTH: Okay.] I wasn't reflecting on there not being anything going on upstairs while there was nothing going on.
- 3:51 RTH: Got it. And, and are you, are you reflecting on the oatmeal? Or are you I'm just seeing the oatmeal.
- 4:07 Michael: I think *reflecting* would be too, would connote too much. I, it was, I was just not really, I was only maybe, maybe I, maybe I was only half conscious. Maybe that's why half of what was happening was nothing. I don't know what "half conscious" means. I'm just saying those words. But I was barely, barely, I mean, when it, when the beeper went off and I thought, *okay, what was I paying attention to?* The best I could do was while I was vaguely aware of the oatmeal, and I was vaguely aware of the fact that I was stirring it and that that was all I could come up with.
- 4:42 RTH: Okay. And about the, let's, let's talk about the stirring. Is the stirring about, I feel the resistance of the oatmeal.
- 4:52 Michael: Exactly.
- 4:55 RTH: So it's not the *action* of stirring so much as it is the,
- 4:59 Michael: The *resistance*. That's correct. I was feeling to see if it was thickening up.
- 5:06 RTH: Okay.
- 5:06 Michael: But I wouldn't assert that. I would *not* say that I was having that thought. I'm feeling to see if it's thickening up. I think that was only me retrospectively realizing that that's what was happening.
- 5:17 RTH: Okay. So what I'm gathering is that as far as my directly apprehended experience goes, that as far as I can tell, it's all with the—what, what there is of it—is with the oatmeal. [Michael: That's correct.] And I see it and I feel the resistance of it. [Michael: Both of those things.] And there's no doubt some processing in my neurons or whatever, some, well as an oatmeal [inaudible], whatever, but that's not, that's,
- 5:42 Michael: I wasn't thinking that thought. That's correct.
- 5:45 RTH: Okay. And in the seeing, you said it was visual or va, va, vaguely visual. Does vaguely visual mean I don't see it very clearly? Or does it mean I'm, I'm just not much paying attention to it? Or...
- 6:01 Michael: I was definitely not paying much attention to it. Um, I, I would say that I, I, I saw, I think I saw the oatmeal itself quite clearly, but nothing else. It was almost like I was lazily looking at the oatmeal and not paying attention to anything else that was

around. But it wasn't not paying attention, like I was hyper-focused on the oatmeal. It was just the oatmeal was the *one thing* that managed to break through the otherwise not paying attention to anything.

6:30 RTH: Okay. And is the oatmeal just the oatmeal itself, the, the oats whatever? Or does it include the bowl and the spoon and...?

6:30 Agnes comments: Here is where I had a question about your question, Russ. I remember in one of our sessions you said that one of my questions wasn't a good one because it asked about something that Michael hadn't actually mentioned. I don't remember the question anymore, but I remember asking it to clarify what he had experienced. Here, you are asking him about the bowl and the spoon, which he hadn't mentioned. What is the line between licit and illicit assumptions?

Russ comments: I don't recall the earlier criticism—if you can point me to exactly where that was, I may be able to amplify that.

Regarding the present question: I had logged that in his original description (2:42) he said he had a visual experience of a *pot of* oatmeal (and shortly thereafter talked about the spoon, leaving me unsure about whether he intended the pot and the spoon as part of the visual experience. More recently (6:01), he said he saw "just the oatmeal was the *one thing*." So here I am asking for clarification about two different locutions about the same experience. That seems to me to be a question that lives within the realm of what he has said.

6:38 Michael: The, no, I think it was just the oatmeal that I was seeing. Yeah, that's right. Mm-hmm.

6:44 RTH: So I have, for whatever reason, and I don't really care about the reason, but at this particular [inaudible], I am visually interested, we could say, I guess, visually interested in the oatmeal and tactile-y interested in the resistance of the oatmeal.

7:03 Michael: Yes.

7:05 RTH: And that's basically it.

7:06 Michael: That's basically it. Yeah.

7:11 RTH: Then I think I'm happy with that. Agnes, you have questions about that?

7:15 AB: I think I'm okay with, I have, I have meta questions, but I won't ask them. [laughs].

7:19 RTH: Okay. Well put 'em in the, put 'em in the [laughs] comments later, comments later, if you like [laughs]. So onward to number 2. And Agnes, [Michael: Okay.] are, are you gonna ask, or in this version, am I gonna ask all the questions?

7:33 AB: I mean, I'm happy to ask if you allow it.

7:36 RTH: Okay, let's, let's go. But, but if, if I don't, if I don't like the question, I'll correct the question. And, uh, and then we won't discuss why I would correct it. We'll just assume that that was the thing to do and move on?

7:47 AB: Okay.

7:48 RTH: Fair enough?

7:49 AB: I'll try my best to ask the right questions!

7:52 Michael: Okay. [laughs], I'll try to give the right answers!

7:55 RTH: And I'll try, and I'll try to correct them correctly! [laughs].

[Sample 3.2 discussion starts here](#)

7:58 Michael: Okay. We're all doing our jobs. [RTH: That's right.] So, um, so I was, this was looking at a computer screen. The, the word "Friday" was very clear, and then around the word "Friday" were random letters that *were* actually on the screen, but they weren't, didn't appear...they, they were kind of, they were kind of moving around the word "Friday," I would say, almost taunting me with their meaninglessness, [laughs], which I, maybe we have to unpack that. But, and I also said the words "I wanna see Saturday!" I, I was try, I was trying to navigate a very badly designed calendar, and I was trying to get from Friday to Saturday, and I couldn't figure it out. And I said, "I wanna see Saturday" and go, and, and with reference to earlier distinctions that we've made, I'm gonna say that that was 70% spoken, 30% heard. So it was more of a feeling of *saying* it, but I definitely also *heard* the words "I wanna see Saturday."

9:25 AB: Did, did you say it out loud or,

9:27 Michael: I don't know.

9:28 AB: Okay.

9:29 Michael: I, I was by myself. I was not monitoring whether it was out loud or not, but I heard it as if it were out loud.

9:36 AB: You heard it as if it were out loud. And what is the... So there are two things going on. There's the Visual Friday with the swirl of words around it.

9:36 Russ comments: Michael said "letters," not "words." Part of the aspiration for fidelity is to be aligned with such details. In an important sense, it is part of the epoché: there is (or at least may be) some feature of Agnes's psyche (whatever that is) that causes her to hear / conceptualize / remember / whatever "words" when what was said was "letters." I have no idea what that feature is (if anything—it might be a totally random mistake). The moral is: it doesn't matter (in the sense that it can't be specified) what lies behind Agnes's misalignment of how she

understands Michael's experience with his actual description. If she aspires to fidelity, she should log this misalignment and try not to do it again, whatever its source.

Agnes comments: Oops. Misalignment logged!

- 9:52 Michael: Yes. Wasn't even words. It was like characters. And I, I, and I think it was, I, I think I know I, I said epoché today, but, or I'm violating that a little bit. Um, I think it was, I mean, it was real c it wasn't, it was random characters on the screen as well. And I was frustrated by that because what it should have been was a link to Saturday, but instead it was just nonsense. But the nonsense, I had already gotten frustrated and the nonsense had become sort of swirly.
- 10:21 AB: When you say it was swirly, um, was there like a particular speed of swirl? Like can you describe the swirling in more depth than just "swirling"? I mean, was it, did it have a particular speed or, um,
- 10:44 Michael: Yeah, I would say it was. So, so here's a description that might be helpful. Imagine a record player. (I hope I'm not just, I'm a, I hope the age difference between us and Agnes doesn't mean that I can't describe this in terms of record players), but
- 11:02 AB: I know what a record player is! [laughs]
- 11:03 Michael: Imagine a record player and in the, the center of it's, but the center of it's not moving. And that's where the word "Friday" is. And there's some like letter sprinkled around on the record, and they're kind of going around at about, like, the speed of a record around the word "Friday." But there's no, sorry, go ahead.
- 11:25 AB: No, you continue, continue.
- 11:27 Michael: I was just gonna say that, that the, the characters that I was seeing... the "Friday" stayed clear. It was *there*. [Agnes: Mm-hmm.] And then the other stuff, I knew that they were random characters, but I, there was no discernment of specifically what characters they were.
- 11:43 AB: Mm-hmm.
- 11:46 Michael: It was just un, undifferentiated letters and numbers moving around, record-player style
- 11:58 AB: And the, "I wanna see Saturday" what was the...
- 12:03 RTH: [interrupts] So can, before we move on to that, can we [Agnes: Yes, go ahead.] can I ask you more about the, about the... [Agnes: Yes.] So these are characters, not words.
- 12:14 Michael: Correct.

12:15 RTH: And uh, and is, is the record metaphor to mean that these are all going in the same direction at the same...?

12:24 Michael: They *were* all going in the same direction. It was, I didn't think of this at the time, but when Agnes asked that, that was the ki that's kind of the perfect analogy.

12:34 RTH: Okay. And, and how many characters? Are we talking about 1, 10, 100, 1000?

12:39 Michael: More than 10, and less than or fewer than 100.

12:42 RTH: Okay. And so in the dozen or dozens or something like that of characters and, and going around counterclockwise clock clockwise as you see it?

12:53 Michael: Clockwise.

12:54 RTH: And are the individual characters seen clearly?

12:58 Michael: No.

13:00 RTH: So they're,

13:02 Michael: It's more like I just know that they *are* characters rather than that I'm seeing the characters. The word, the only thing I'm seeing clearly is the word "Friday."

13:10 RTH: Okay. And, and in the, in the record player metaphor, there could be distance away, you know, an inch away from the center spindle or two inches away, or

13:24 Michael: Right. They, and they were right around it. And the, and the one, the one failure of this analogy is that they were not moving in a circle. They were moving more like an ellipse around the word "Friday." Like, so.

13:38 RTH: Okay, so wider, a wider ellipse than it is high.

13:41 Michael: Yes. Okay. They were, they were tied in around the word Friday. So here's the word "Friday," my finger, and they were just going around it like this. [gestures around his finger]

13:49 RTH: Okay. So, so the, so more or less equidistant from the word as it goes around?

13:56 Michael: Yeah, that's right.

13:57 RTH: Okay. And, and does that mean that they're, they seem to be sort of all in a line?

14:04 Michael: No, they were...

14:05 RTH: All in the same, all in the same track?

- 14:06 Michael: No, they were kind of like sprinkled around. There weren't in a line going around. It was more like a, um, a cloud of characters that was going around.
- 14:17 RTH: Okay. And, and I'm still interested in the degree of clarity that I see these characters do. Are they, are they individual characters? Like I see 12 or 16 or whatever individual characters? Maybe I can't tell you which ones they are, but they're, but I see this one here and that one there and whatever.
- 14:40 Michael: It's like, it's like seeing a crowd of people. You, you *know* that this, that it's individual people, but you're not focused on any single person. I suppose you *could* focus on a single person, but that didn't happen. So there's a crowd of characters, and it presents itself as a crowd of individual characters, but none of them is the focus. I'm not focused in on any one of them on its particularity.
- 15:09 RTH: Okay. But these are, but these are *individually seen* characters as distinct from, I could *say*, you know, there's a, there's a bunch of characters out there and they're moving around, but I'm not *seeing* them. I *know* they're there.
- 15:26 Michael: No, I'm seeing, I'm seeing the indivi, I'm seeing them individually, but I'm not seeing them, I'm not focused on any individual, one of them.
- 15:35 RTH: Okay.
- 15:39 Michael: I think that's the right way to say it.
- 15:41 RTH: Okay. And is there a color? Is there color involved in this? [Michael: No.] And you say I these are the characters that are on the page or on the screen, I guess on the screen?
- 15:55 Michael: Well, I shouldn't say that. They were the very same ones. So I was looking at the computer screen, and I had been looking at it for, I don't know, half a minute or so, trying to figure out how to get from Friday to Saturday. And all I could find were these stupid random characters that shouldn't have even been visible to me. And then I, then I sort of, I don't know, maybe zoned out a little bit or got a little frustrated or something. And I stopped focusing on the characters. And that's when they started doing this moving thing. And I was just looking at the word "Friday," and I was obviously, I was also saying, "I wanna see Saturday."
- 16:32 RTH: Okay. So what I've got about the characters is there are characters on the screen. The characters on the screen are not moving. But for whatever reason in my visual experience, which is of as if, not really as if, but I'm *seeing* the real screen, and the real screen has these characters moving around it, even though in reality they're not moving. [Michael: Yeah.] In some, in some reality. But it might
- 16:56 Michael: Perceptive. I mean, my eyes are, my eyes are pointed at the screen in real life, and I assume that seeing the word "Friday," I'm seeing the word Friday as it is on the screen. But then the other characters that were there, that were earlier, kind of, I was earlier kind of searching for them to see if there was some clue about how to

get to Saturday. I had given up on that, and I think I was just kind of in a moment of mild frustration. They started, I, I said this afterwards, but I don't think I had this feeling at the time that they were taunting me. Like they were saying, "ha ha ha, you can't get Saturday." But I, but I wasn't thinking that at the time. That was me kind of saying what that experience might've been like afterwards.

17:39 RTH: Okay. I, I'm, I'm gonna be interested in that, but I, but before I get there, I think I would like to know whether this, the, whether the experience, the experience at the moment of the beep is *seeing these things move around the screen*. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] Not, it's not, I want, I wanna distinguish, I want, I want to know which is what is it is whether I see these on the screen or I, they're *imaginary*, I see images that are going around.

18:06 Michael: They're *not* imaginary.

18:08 RTH: So they're, as far as your experience at the moment is, *I see these screen characters and they're moving around*.

18:13 Michael: Yes. Yes.

18:15 RTH: Okay. Even though in some way, in some retrospective, an, analytical way, you can say, "well, you know, they probably weren't really moving around."

18:21 Michael: No. If you had, if you had stopped me, if there was been someone on my shoulder and said, are they really moving? I would've known that the answer to that question is *No*.

18:30 RTH: But the experience *still* is of [Michael: Yes.] *these are on the screen*.

18:30 Russ comments: The distinction seems important: *I see them* as real (that is, I do *not* see them as imaginary), but at the same time *I could say*, if asked (which I wasn't) that *they are not real*.

18:33 Michael: Absolutely.

18:34 RTH: Okay. And, and then we haven't yet talked about the taunting or the irritation or the whatever. Is that

18:44 Michael: Yeah, go ahead. Sorry.

18:45 RTH: Is that present to you in the moment? Is that...?

18:48 Michael: I don't think so. I mean, I, I think it's one of those things where afterwards I realized that I was feeling that way, but I wasn't aware of being, of feeling that way in the moment.

18:59 RTH: So...

- 18:59 Michael: I, I think the whole ex, the whole, I think the whole experience was one of mild frustration, but I wasn't actually feeling the frustration at the moment that the beep went off.
- 19:09 RTH: Okay. Fair enough. Then I think I'm good with that aspect. Agnes, if you want to go on to the Saturday portion, unless you got more on this portion, now that we've, so...
- 19:23 AB: The, the, "I wanna see Saturday," um, what was the temporal location of that relative to the visual experience?
- 19:35 Michael: Same. They were happening at the same time. I said the words, I think the, the spinning of the, uh, the spinning of the letters had already started. I'm pretty s, I'm not gonna swear to this, but I think, I think the temporal, the sequence of events is something like this: I'm looking at the word Friday. The characters that were nearby, it started sort of spinning around it. And then I said, "I wanna see Saturday," which was just to me, if I was just saying out loud, or at least to myself, I don't know if it was out loud or not, but I was saying the thing that I was thinking, which is "I wanna see Saturday."
- 20:14 AB: And I think I, I may be misremembering what you said, but did you say that you had the, the experience was like 75% that you were saying it and 25% that you were hearing it or something like that?
- 20:14 Russ comments: Michael had said 70—30 (7:58).
- 20:29 Michael: Close to that. I don't know what numbers I gave, but I, maybe I said 70—30. But yes, I mean, I was trying to go back to it some distinctions we were making earlier, because Russ would ask, well, did you have the sensation of *saying* it or, or was it more of a *heard* thing? And I mean, I think both were going on, but the, but the, the *saying* of it was more salient to me in the moment than the *hearing* of it.
- 20:53 AB: Hmm.
- 20:54 Michael: It was a, it was a kind of, yeah, it was a kind of an expression of what my frustration was about. *Please show me Saturday.*
- 21:04 AB: Hmm. Okay. I'm gonna ask a question, which may be a banned question, but I'm not sure, but I'm genuinely not sure. Um, and partly I'm asking this question because of something that Russ asked earlier in the visual context. Um, like earlier you said you're not sure whether you in fact said it out loud [Michael: Mm-hmm.] or not, but your experience was sort of 70—30 of saying it out loud.
- 21:38 Michael: No, not 70—30 saying it out loud. [Agnes: Right.] 70—30 breaks up... I'm not, it's not that I'm 70% certain that it was out loud or whatever. That's not what I'm trying, sorry, I, I'm not being clear. So what I mean is, I, I have no idea whether I, whether like if another person was in the room, would they have heard me say that or not. I have no idea. So I guess that's 50—50. I would just flip a coin and guess.

21:38 Russ comments: RTH thought that Michael (7:58) had been clear about what he meant by 70—30.

22:04 AB: Uh,

22:05 Michael: Um, but there was a diff the different distinction, the one I was trying to get, get at was, was the, was the experience more a sense of *producing* the words or was it a sense of *receiving* the words, like hearing the words? And maybe I've misunderstood the earlier distinction, but that was my understanding of the distinction that, or a distinction that was made earlier.

22:33 AB: Yes, that is,

22:34 Michael: And I was saying that it, that it's kind of, I was, it, I was more, it was more, it felt more like an experience of *speaking*, but the hearing part was not *absent*.

22:45 AB: So, so that is actually what I understood. Oh,

22:48 Michael: Okay. Okay.

22:50 AB: What you just, your clarification, that is how I understood it. And I guess my but pre, but what I was gonna ask is that, if I remember correctly, previously we had made that distinction in the context of words that you had not said out loud, but you were describing your experience.

23:12 Michael: Yes. I think...

23:13 AB: You were certain that you hadn't said, said the words out loud, but you were describing your experience of the words [Michael: Mm-hmm. Right.] And I'm curious about, in this context is the fact that you said you weren't sure, and yet you described the experience kind of in sim, like using similar terms.

23:32 Michael: So I think these two, I think these two distinctions are orthogonal to each other. So there's one distinction, what between are you do, *are you aware of whether it's out loud or not?* And then there's another distinction, which is [Agnes: Okay. Okay.] Are, are you, *is it an experience of speaking or an experience of hearing?*

23:55 AB: Gotcha.

23:55 Michael: To, to my way of thinking, these are orthogonal distinctions. And so, on the awareness of whether it's out loud or not, I have no idea. I just, I wasn't paying attention to that. I can say more about what, what happens when I do pay attention to it and how I like what the, what that kind of experience is. But that was not going on in this particular case. But the experience, but, but was I experiencing it sort of productively or receptively? [laughs] It was more on the productive side than the reception side. Um, but I definitely heard the words. It wasn't just like silent

speaking to yourself. There was, there was an, or there was definitely an auditory aspect to it.

24:46 AB: And did you say it, um, just in the way that you said it to us right now? Like, “I wanna see...”

24:53 Michael: Yeah, yeah, exactly. “I wanna see *Saturday*.” I, I probably emphasize I’m not, I don’t remember, but I, but yeah, so I’m, I’m kind of guessing now, but I, I feel like I must have emphasized the word *Saturday*. “I wanna see *Saturday*,” cuz I was seeing Friday and “I wanna see Saturday.”

24:53 Russ comments: It certainly makes sense that *Saturday* was said with emphasis. And, indeed, it probably *was* said with emphasis. However, from the standpoint of fidelity, it is much better to say “I don’t know” than to say “I said it with emphasis,” *even if that statement is a correct characterization*. The process is iterative all the way down: I would much rather have us leave something unspecified (which perhaps will lead to be higher-fidelity observers in the future) than to state something that we’re not sure about (which likely will lead us to be more cavalierly careless in the future).

25:08 AB: Mm-hmm. And how, um... You said that this, it was roughly simultaneous to the Friday and the word swirling, correct?

25:22 Michael: Yeah. I think the words started swirling before I said anything, but it was not very long. But it’s, it’s, this is, we’re talking about very quick rapid succession series of events. [AB: And how...] I’m only describing the last couple seconds. I, I, *before*. I say *before the beep*, the same provisos in place as last time. I don’t, I still, I don’t think I’m any better at knowing at, at, at these relatively short timescales. Like did it happen while I was saying the word *see*? Or was it happening during the *ur* of *Saturday*? I have no idea where in that sequence the beep came. It could have come at the beginning, at the end, but I finished the thought, or the sentence, or whatever before I turned the beep off. [laughs]

25:22 Russ comments: I think, and have written, that it is often, perhaps always, impossible to be temporally absolutely precise. What Michael says here is very typical among careful DES participants.

26:07 AB: And what was the, like, how salient was the, “I wanna see Saturday” relative to the visual? Um,

26:17 Michael: I think they were about the same. Yeah. I would go 50—50 on that if I had to give those numbers, those fake numbers. [laughs]

26:29 AB: Okay. Those are all my questions. [laughs]

26:31 RTH: I thought those were good questions and I have no more further questions except to clarify, the swirl I’m gathering from your gestures is clockwise. Is that true?

26:31 Russ comments. Michael had said that it was clockwise (12:53); RTH apparently lost that detail.

26:42 Michael: Yes.

26:43 RTH: Okay. Then I'm,

26:45 Michael: That might be anti-clockwise to you [gestures clockwise from his perspective], but it's...

26:47 RTH: Anticlockwise to me. But for, [Michael: Okay. Yeah.] I'm, I'm always interested in *your* experience and not *mine*.

26:52 Michael: Okay. Yeah. No, it was clockwise to me.

26:56 RTH: Okay. Alright. On to number 3.

Sample 3.3 discussion starts here

26:58 Michael: Onto number 3. Okay. [sighs loudly] Alright. So I'm gonna say this is a 25%—75% thing. The 25% is a visual thing. [gestures with widely outstretched arms] There are freezer doors creating a kind of hallway, but I can only see them up to about 20 feet, maybe less, in front of me. It's not that they disappear, it's just, that's just not, I'm just not like, that becomes a fog. But somehow, even though they are parallel, there's something about this visual experience that tells me that these doors converge in the sort of unseen distance. And so there's kind of the experience of *you can't get out this way*. It's a visual experience of *you can't get out this way*. That's one thing that's happening. There's a whole backstory to this, which I'm not gonna tell you, at least not right now. If you ask me, I'll tell you, but I'm trying to, I'm trying, trying to be epoché-like here.

28:06 RTH: Okay. One, one, one step at a time here.

28:08 Michael: Um, so the other thing that's happening is that there's a kind of slightly **panicky**, **with my left hand brushing my head**, [gestures a rapid, energetic brushing with his left hand of the top left of his head] **my head like this**, as if it's as if like a bug fell on your head and you almost like, without really thinking about it, **kind of did the w-u-u-u thing, you know, where you kind of quickly do that**. **And that was in reaction to the feeling (I knew it wasn't this, I'm just telling you what it felt like), the feeling of like a spider with sharp feet crawling around your head. But actually that was anger. And I knew it was anger, but it manifested as something with sharp feet going like this. And it all happened very quickly. And I did the w-u-u-u thing to get it off.**

29:10 RTH: [pause] Is that the exposition? [Michael: That's it.] Okay. So the...

29:13 Michael: Obviously there's context that I'm not giving you because I'm waiting for you to ask instead of me telling you.

- 29:18 RTH: Fair, fair enough. So the, the, the bulk of this experience, the 75-ish part of this experience is the spider-sharp-feet-anger stuff.
- 29:18 Russ comments: A big part of the DES skill is the ability to call attention to an experience without biasing / squeezing / pressuring / suggesting one or another particular interpretation of the experience. Viewers may judge for themselves, but my interpretation is that RTH, by reciting all the words Michael has used in this aspect of his experience, is saying *I wish to focus us on the part of the experience where you used these words*, without emphasizing any particular aspect of the experience.
- 29:29 Michael: Yes.
- 29:31 RTH: And I understand what you have said as being experientially, this is a spider with sharp feet, [Michael: Yes.] but I also in some way understand it to be anger.
- 29:31 Russ comments: Notice that RTH's 29:31 turn is explicitly *about RTH's understanding*, not directly about Michael's experience. This is RTH's attempt to be genuine on his side of the chasm. [RE the chasm, see the comment at 53:31 of transcript 1.]
- 29:46 Michael: I know that's what it is in the moment. I'm not, I'm not thinking maybe there's a spider there. I know that I'm angry and I know that that's what the, and, and I know, I know that *that is the anger*, that, that feeling that *this* business [gestures around his head], but I still instinctually reacted the way you would react as if it were a bug or something. [RTH: Okay.] Like, the feeling just made me do this. I wouldn't, I didn't like think, *oh, I need to get that off my head*. It was just more like the, this like instinctual reaction of doing that.
- 30:21 RTH: So does it make more sense to say that *from my point of view* (and by, and whenever I use first person, I'm, I'm talking Michael's point of view). [Michael: Okay.] I don't care about my own point of view ever) but the, from my point of view, do I feel angry? Or do I feel buggy? Or do I feel that the bug *is anger*? I don't, I still haven't quite grasped that, I don't think.
- 30:48 Michael: Um, I definitely feel angry. And it's the, the anger is the feeling of the bug. There's no actual bug. And I didn't think there was a bug.
- 31:00 RTH: Okay. So the, so this ex, this experience, which to describe to these guys, I'm saying feels like a spider with sharp feet, but that is my experience of anger. [RTH: Yes.] [coughs] Sorry.
- 31:19 Michael: I would say it's, I would say it's the same, the same kind of thing as if you said, I felt hot in my face and that was my embarrassment. It's the same exact deal, except that I didn't feel hot in my face. I felt prickly buggy-like things on my scalp.
- 31:38 RTH: Okay. And, and so what I'm, what I'm, I'm looking distinction that I'm trying to make sure that I'm understanding here is: it's not like I feel anger elsewhere, but

this anger is somehow represented by bug and spider and sharp feet or whatever. No, it is the fact that I feel anger and the way I feel anger, at least in this moment, is spider-bug-feet.

32:12 Michael: That is correct.

32:13 RTH: That is correct? Okay. And it's real enough that I instinctively brush away. [Michael: Yes. Yes.] And is that, is that a brushing away.... Is that, is that a, I'm, I'm brushing a bug-away experience? Or am is it a brushing-*anger*-away experience? Or doesn't that make sense?

32:48 Michael: I mean, it makes sense. I understand the question. I, I don't think it has a good answer though. [RTH: Okay.] Um, I think that the action, I was certainly aware that the action was happening, um, but I, it wasn't intentional enough for it to have either of those ideas behind it. Yeah. Uh, that's, that's the best. Sorry. That's the best I can do there.

33:17 RTH: Okay. So I'm, I'm totally capable of answering, er, *asking* questions that don't have answers. And, and part of the art, I think of DES is to ask the questions up to the limit of what we, what we can do. And the only way you can find out is ask, ask questions [Michael: Yeah.] that are at or at or beyond the limit. And so that's part of our, part of our deal, is, you gotta teach me what, how to ask the questions, basically.

33:39 Michael: Okay.

33:39 RTH: So my understanding is that the, my anger, I experience my anger as a bug crawling up here. That, but that is not a, it's, it's, that *is* the anger.

34:03 Michael: That is the anger. Yep.

34:11 RTH: And sometimes I've gotten the impression that it's a bug, which is sort of right here [points to his top left head]. And sometimes it seems like it's [gestures a wider area]

34:17 Michael: It was mostly on this side of my head, but it was moving around. But I reached up with my *left* hand and did that. That's like, I was, I was hitting the spot where I was feeling it. [RTH: Okay.]And so it was somewhere like this area left side of my head.

34:33 RTH: And does this seem like a, a smallish bug or a big tarantula bugger, or,

34:39 Michael: Um,

34:41 RTH: Doesn't that question make sense?

34:42 Michael: That makes sense. No, it's bigger than small. I, I, I would say that if you take four your fingers like this, like there is its feet. [RTH: Okay.] That's about the right size. [RTH: Okay.]

35:03 RTH: So I think I have asked the questions that I can think of to ask about that. Agnes, you wanna ask questions about the anger experience?

35:11 AB: Can I... Yeah. Can I ask about the experience of this [rubs above her head] bit?

35:16 Michael: Yep.

35:18 RTH: Only if only if you allow that *there is no* experience with that. He's doing it!

35:22 AB: I allow. Okay. I *allow* that there's no experience. [RTH: Okay.] Um,

35:28 RTH: And by, and by, and by *allow*, I mean, *be perfectly happy with* there being no experience.

35:32 AB: Yes. Yes. I'm perfectly happy if there's no experience. [RTH: Okay.] I'm curious whether there was an experience. [RTH: Perfect.] And if so, I'm curious what the quality of that experience was.

35:32 Russ comments: RTH's presupposition antennae are still jangling. He's no mind reader, and he happily acknowledges the possibility of unfair interpretation, but he does have 50-ish years of experience trying to be sensitive to presuppositions. With that caveat, it sounds to him like the "I'm curious what the quality of that experience was" is stronger than the "and if so." To the extent that there is as presupposition in the vicinity, this question will pressure in the direction of *there must be an experience of the motion*.

Suppose Michael now responds, "The quality of that experience was X (no matter what X is)." RTH would discount that description because it was *at least possibly* the result of an unstated pressure that there *must be* some experience X. The moral for me is clear: If you want to believe the description X, you must have asked the question in such a way as to unambiguously convey that you don't care about whether there is or is not an X, or what the characteristics of X are.

It is not enough to say "I'm perfectly happy" and "and if so." The art of the epoché is to *be* perfectly happy, and to be absolutely even handed about the *if so*. Until one reaches that level of perfection (which I do not claim to have reached myself), then I think one should practice asking questions in a way that *goes against* whatever explicit or vestigial preference one might have. That is, if you can fairly convincingly suggest *not* X, and Michael says, "Actually, it is X," then I think you *do* have grounds for believing Michael's description. The stronger your presuppositions, the harder you have to work at conveying indifference. (But there are limits to how much one can stretch this.)

Agnes comments: For me, part of the challenge is phrasing the questions in the moment. I am certainly not trying to presuppose anything! But after our extensive discussion of the spider/anger experience, I wanted to prompt Michael to say more about what the head-rubbing experience he described was like. Maybe it's a problem with the word "experience": my understanding was that there was **some** kind of experience, no matter how minimal, since Michael mentioned it in his

original description. And I was attempting to ask an open-ended question that invited him to say more about what that was like.

Russ comments: RE: First, I absolutely accept the difficulty of phrasing the questions in the moment. That is something that (like any skill) requires practice, and more practice, and still more practice.

But more importantly, consider this Exercise for the reader:

Michael's original description of the head-rubbing was at 28:08. Look carefully at that description and color code what he says as being either a description of head-rubbing *behavior* (put that in red), a description of head-rubbing *experience* (put that in blue), or you're *not sure* (put that in purple). Leave black anything that is not relevant to the head-rubbing. I will put my answer at the end of this transcript.

35:44 Michael: I think [pause] I, so I, I definitely was... So, I was aware of the feeling of my hand on my head doing, (I can't do it right now cuz I have these headphones on) but I was aware of the feeling on my head, y'know, kind of doing this, um, y'know. But I was *not* really, to the best of my recollection, I'm not gonna swear to this, I'm feeling like 60% confident when I say this, but I don't think there was much awareness of my arm *per se*. But there was awareness of what it, there was awareness of the feeling of my hand on my head, the feeling *in my head* of my hand, on my head. I don't think my hand and my arm were part of what I was at all considering in the moment. It was, it was all about *the head*. It was all about the head. And so the, on my head, I could definitely feel my hand going like this. And obviously when you do that, there's some feeling in your arm. But I wasn't attentive to that at all. It was all, it was all about what was happening on my head.

35:44 Russ comments: As I have said, one should examine the quality of a question by the extent to which the answer is a straightforward description of experience. To my ear, Michael's 35:44 turn is not a straightforward description of experience. Below I present his 35:44 turn again and highlight subjunctifiers in yellow and green, alternating the highlighting so that we can see where one subjunctifier ends and the next one begins. There are 21 subjunctifiers in 203 words, which is quite a lot. We could quibble about whether one or another of these is actually a subjunctifier (but repetitions, pauses, alterations in direction count) or whether I have missed some. It doesn't really matter whether we count to 21, or 17, or 25, or whatever—it is a pretty highly subjunctified turn.

I think [pause] I, so I, I definitely was... So, I was aware of the feeling of my hand on my head doing, (I can't do it right now cuz I have these headphones on) but I was aware of the feeling on my head, y'know, kind of doing this, um, y'know. But I was *not* really, to the best of my recollection, I'm not gonna swear to this, I'm feeling like 60% confident when I say this, but I don't think there was much awareness of my arm *per se*. But there was awareness of what it, there was awareness of the feeling of my hand on my head, the feeling *on my head* of my hand, on my head. I don't think my hand and my arm were part of what I was at all considering in the moment. It was, it was all about *the head*. It was all about the head. And so the, on my head, I could definitely feel my hand going like this. And obviously when you do

that, there's some feeling in your arm. But I wasn't attentive to that at all. It was all, it was all about what was happening on my head.

The question is, why the subjunctification? I'm no mind reader, but my guess is that Michael understood that when Agnes asked about hand experience, she *wanted to hear about hand experience* (even though she said she was happy not to hear about it). Michael, being a nice guy, would like to please Agnes, but he also wants to describe his experience with fidelity, and as a result he can't easily do either one. So he subjunctifies, which is his grammar producer's way of saying *I'm not giving a straightforward description of experience here*.

Notice that the part of this turn that is *not* subjunctified is Michael's description of the experience in his *head*, *not* about the quality of the *hand* experience (which is what Agnes asked about). So, to my ear, Agnes asked about X (hand experience), Michael subjunctified when talking about X, but talked more straightforwardly about Y (head experience). That, to my ear, is a pretty strong suggestion that *there was no X*.

36:45 AB: And can you say more about what was happening on your head as you were

36:50 Michael: Yeah. There was anger crawling around! I was trying to get it off! [laughs]

36:54 AB: Yeah. So, so that, I'm curious,

36:56 Michael: I'm well aware of how weird that sounds. I'm trying not to say those words, but I mean, there it is.

37:03 AB: I think, what I'm curious to hear more about is what that experience of trying to get the anger off was precisely, right. Because you described like how that felt, because you described the anger using this metaphor of a spider. Like it felt, the anger felt like a spider. And I'm curious what the rubbing felt like. Right? So would you continue that analogy if you had an actual spider, you went like this? Or like if you did that, um, maybe the spider would, you'd get it off and you wouldn't feel the crawling? Or did it not feel that way?

37:46 Michael: Well, I never got a chance to really, the feeling never really came to a closure, exactly, because the beeper went off and, and then I left. Um, but so, so, so I couldn't, I couldn't say like, I, I don't think I'm aware of like how that feeling subsided in the end. Uh, the beeper went off. Like, I was like, oh, the beeper went off. I, I wrote down a couple of quick notes. I left, I went to the car and wrote down some more notes. Um, and somewhere in there that the feeling subsided, but I don't, I'm not a, I, I wasn't conscious of that sequence of events. It was like, woo. And then somewhere in there, maybe during it, maybe right after, I'm, again, not sure the, the beep, the beeper went off. I, I'm, I feel like I'm not answering your question, but I'm telling you everything I can think to tell you. So,

38:49 AB: Okay. You're allowed to not answer my question!

38:55 RTH: So we done with that portion. [AB: Yes.] And then there's the 25% freezer-door deal, which I didn't really quite understand. So maybe you gotta start that at the beginning.

39:05 Michael: Okay. Well, I was in the freezer aisle of a grocery store,

39:08 RTH: Ah hah! That I didn't understand.

39:10 Michael: Well, I didn't say that cuz I was epoché! [they laugh]

39:13 RTH: Okay,

39:17 Michael: But that's where I was standing in the moment, and I witnessed something in front of me. That's what, that's what made me angry. That didn't involve me, but I saw it. And so in my visual field, there were the freezer doors, kind of, I was standing like literally as if they made a hallway, you know, on either side. [gestures with his hands like a long hallway] But then there was this kind of, there was this like, I think everything was normal, visually normal, but somehow the experience nonetheless was *as if* these things *close off* up ahead. So I felt, I felt like in order to get outta there, which I wanted to do, I had to go backwards.

40:00 RTH: So the freezer doors and this, there are, I'm on an aisle that does in fact have freezer doors. [Michael: Yes.] And the freezer doors are creating the aisle. [Michael: Yes.] And I see them the way the freezer doors actually are, *except that* in somehow in my perception, they extend to a close off in that direction

40:20 Michael: Somehow I, I know, quote unquote, that these freezer doors somewhere beyond where I can see them come meet together in almost like non-Euclidean fashion. [RTH: Okay.] They're parallel, but somehow they meet somewhere in the future in a way that prevents me from going that direction.

40:36 RTH: So we don't have to worry about Euclid in the, in the experiential world. That's the [Michael: Well, that's good!] [laughs] That's the good news. There are, there are no... The rules of the external world... That's, that, that *is* the epoché right there, actually. The, the, the rules, the Euclidian rules that apply in the external world do not necessarily apply. So I'm in an, I'm in an aisle that I don't *see*, but I *understand* [gestures with his hands coming together at the fingertips] and, and, and doesn't allow me to get out going that way.

41:01 Michael: That is correct.

41:03 RTH: And I *know* out of, in that, that to get out, which I want to do somehow, I want to get, I want to get out, I gotta go backwards. I gotta go behind me. [Michael: Yeah. Mm-hmm.] And...

41:13 Michael: I was at the beginning of the aisle, so going, going behind me really just ma it was a matter of turning around and, and going a different direction. I wasn't, I wasn't in

the middle of it. [RTH: Okay.] I was near the front of it or the back of it, depending on, I guess which side, the front.

41:27 RTH: Okay. And that, that *I need to go backwards*, I take it as part of the *seeing*. [Michael: Yes.] I see this as occluded going that way or blocked or whatever going that way [points forward] which means I have, I have to go that way [points backward]. [Michael: Yes.] So it's not like I have a separate thought that says, *oh, this*

41:47 Michael: No! It's just like, I just see it as, as being closed off in this direction.

41:52 RTH: Okay. And so these things are related, apparently, to the actual event that is, I wanna escape this event and I feel angry as a spider on my head, [Michael: Mm.] feel spider-angry or whatever. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] Do I feel them as related? Or does it seem like these are parallel but not, or doesn't, can't really tell.

42:21 Michael: I mean, they're happening at the same time. Um...

42:24 RTH: Okay. But one is not the manifestation of the other. [Michael: No.] Doesn't feel like that. [Michael: No, no, no.] Seem like two sort of separate deals.

42:32 Michael: There. Yeah. It's just this, yeah. There's, I mean, they're happening at the same time and they're all related to my current circumstances, but there, there's no conceptual connection between them.

42:44 RTH: Okay. And, and is my seeing accurate as far as you can tell? I'm seeing the world the way the world is, even though I know that it comes together, which I know it doesn't really come together, but whatever. But what I see is the way it is?

43:03 Michael: In that moment. I was not thinking at all about the way the world really is. It was just, I just saw the way blocked and turned around and went the other way.

43:12 RTH: Okay. So the reality of the world is not part of this experience, [Michael: That's correct.] This is a *I'm, I'm visually blocked* [Michael: Yes.] *going that way*. [Michael: Yes.] Okay.

43:26 Michael: I mean, again, if you had po, if, if, if someone had like, been able to like freeze a situation and say, "Michael, take a moment and think, do you really think this way is blocked?" I would've said, no. Of course it's not. But I did not pause to have that thought at all.

43:42 RTH: Okay. Then I think I am good with this sample, unless Agnes has additional...

43:50 AB: I, I have a small question just about the freezer doors, which it doesn't need to be like a big thing. I just wanna make sure I understand. Um, when you were initially describing the freezer doors, I was kind of imagining like open free, the doors of like a two freezer. But what I'm understanding now I think is that you are in like a grocery store aisle and the freezer doors are just like, there's freezers on one side and freezers on the other side. Is that what you mean? Freezer?

44:19 Michael: That's correct. [AB: Okay.] That's correct,

44:21 RTH: Yes. Okay.

44:23 Michael: I was in Whole Foods and I was in one of the freezer aisles of Whole Foods, if that helps at all.

44:30 RTH: So I'm happy to move on to the next beep *without knowing* what it is that made Michael angry because I don't, be, because I think it's probably better to do that. But, but if Michael wants to tell us about that for whatever reason...

44:30 Russ comments: Not asking about the causative event is part of the epoché: RTH is interested in the *experience*, regardless of its supposed or actual connection to some real-world event. Declining to ask about it, I think, conveys RTH's intention to cleave to experience and eschew all else.

On the other hand, RTH is sensitive to the possibility that Michael may have a reason to tell us about that experience, and he indicates he is open to that. That is an acknowledgement the DES interview takes place in the real world, with real people, who have real desires, etc., and that we should not pretend otherwise.

44:45 Michael: I'd rather *not* tell you about it! So that's fine with me.

44:47 RTH: Good! Let's move on.

44:48 AB: Oh, now I'm curious! I'm gonna ask you later!

44:51 Michael: [laughs]. Alright. You can tell me, you can ask me later. It's not a big deal. I just don't wanna relive it [AB laughs] at the moment.

Sample 3.4 discussion starts here

44:55 Michael: Um, okay. So, uh, so I was a little discombobulated after that. I went, uh, this is still morning all, this was this morning by the way. Um, I was driving, um, the original plan was to drive straight to campus, but instead I was just randomly driving kind of out the opposite direction actually. Um, I guess you would call it blind driving, like where you're driving, but you're, and you're obviously you're paying attention cuz there's no accidents involves, but there's not really any like, much awareness of like where I'm going or why or what's going on around me or anything like that.

45:39 Instead what's happening is, um, so this is the first time this happened in one of these things. Um, there, there, there was a voice that was very familiar, a voice that is very familiar to me and was speaking in a way that's very, that's very common for this particular voice. And it was just saying, "That's really nice. That's so great. That's really nice. That's so great." It was not always alternating between those, but it was saying those two things a lot. And that had been going on for a little while and I trying to sort of make it slow down, or stop even. I said, "Yes, John, that's really nice." Except I didn't say "John." I said it's real name, which I'm not gonna say, but I said, "Yes, John, that's really nice." And somewhere in either before or after or

during that, that spoken phrase, that's when the beep happened. I think that wasn't the first time I said it, though.

45:39 Russ comments: In the first few minutes of interview 9, Michael will disclose that "John" is Michael's colleague Chris Tollefsen. See also the discussions below at 1:09:28 and in interview 6 at 25:39.]

46:46 RTH: [pause] So this is your beep, Agnes, if you're...

46:47 Michael: Sorry. So this is your

46:49 Michael: Again, sorry,

46:50 AB: I was just seeing if Michael was done.

46:52 Michael: Yeah, sorry, I meant to, I meant to add in since we've done this for the other ones. This is another one where it's a feeling of production. Maybe this is more like 80—20 or 90—10, because it's mostly about the production rather than about the hearing. But I, I don't know if it was out loud or not.

47:12 AB: You mean when you said "that's really nice, John," you don't know if that part was out loud?

47:18 Michael: I said, I, I said "Yes, John, that's really nice." And I don't know if I mouthed those words out loud or if that was, [AB: Ahh.] if that was all just thinking.

47:27 AB: Uhhuh Uhuh.

47:27 Michael: But there was definitely the feeling of, of productive speechifying.

47:33 AB: Ah.

47:33 Michael: It wasn't something I heard. What I was hearing was, was him saying, "that's really nice. That's so great."

47:41 AB: So, um, so there are two experiences, like kind of categories of experiences. There's the blind driving as you called it.

47:52 Michael: I don't think that was an experience. I was just, that was really just for context. [AB: Okay.] I was driving, I was not paying any attention. I mean, hopefully there was some part of my brain that was paying attention, right? I mean, I didn't run into anything [laughs], but I, but I was not experiencing the driving at the moment. I was experiencing the talking the, and, and by the way, John wasn't talking when the beeper went off. That was prior. I was *responding*. I was saying, "yes, John, that's really nice." But he, but he was not speaking at that moment. It was just me speaking in that moment when the beep went off. But I did, I didn't think, I think I, I felt like maybe that was not, maybe I should have epochéd a little more there. But I

thought if I just said, “yes, John, that’s really nice” without telling you that I was responding to something, that would be too mysterious.

48:47 AB: So, um, so the kind of totality of your experience in that moment, um, well, is captured in the “Yes, John, that’s really nice.”

49:04 Michael: That’s like, that’s the vast majority of it. Yes. I think there was a vague sense of being discombobulated [laughs], but I, that’s, I couldn’t say more. I couldn’t say more than that.

49:15 AB: So can I ask, I sorry, a procedural question here. I mean, one thing we talked about before is the question, uh, like Michael raised the question of how long the experience is. And here, I mean, in previous beeps that we’ve discussed, it’s been kind of longer. Here, Michael said, um, I’m giving you this voice as background context; however, when the beeper went off, it was just me saying this thing. So given that he said that, are we just focusing on what he said and we’re ignoring the voice from before?

50:02 RTH: Yes. [AB: Okay.] He, Michael gets to discern what is the moment of, which is the, the sort of the organized totality of experience from his point of view, [AB: Okay.] which he has said pretty clearly is [AB: Okay.] “Yes, John, that’s very nice.” Really. “That’s really nice.” And, and the other stuff *came before*.

50:23 AB: Okay. Okay.

50:25 Michael: It, that’s all correct. I mean, the only, the only, only my only reason for adding this stuff before, or my main reason, I guess, was that those words were definitely spoken *to him*. Like it wasn’t just ran. So it wasn’t just words I happened to speak. Like there was a, there was an intended recipient, so to say, um, so that were spoken in that manner of this is intended for you and the hope is that you’ll be quiet for a little while.

50:57 AB: So what the, when you say that the words were intended for him and there’s like this hope, um,

51:16 Michael: It’s like if he, it’s like if you’re talking to a 2-year-old [AB: Mm-hmm.] Right? So ima, imagine, I don’t have to imagine this cuz I’ve raised three, two year olds. But imagine that the 2-year-old is saying as they do the same thing over and over and over again. At some point you get the sense that what they want is some acknowledgement [laughs], right? And so you say, “Yes, Susie, that is a very pretty sunset” or whatever this per whatever they’re saying over and over and over again. And part of it is just to acknowledge them. And part of it probably at least as if you’re being anno, if it, if it’s feeling like it’s getting a little annoying, part of it is to hope that by acknowledging them, maybe they’ll not keep saying it. It was like that.

52:08 AB: I guess I’m wondering whether, when you say that, um, are you referring to like a distinctive experiential quality of that? Or simply like the intention that the person will shut up and the tone? Or is there some kind of experiential quality, for example,

distinct from, um, in your earlier example when you were saying, "I want it to be Saturday?"

52:43 Michael: Um, I mean I wasn't explicitly entertaining the thought *I hope that by saying this, we'll stop talking for a little while*. So there wasn't like an explicit entertaining of that idea. But, but there's some sense in which the meaning of what I was doing, which was very clear to me in the moment, *was* an attempt, it was intended to stop the talking for a little bit. Um, so I feel like that's gotta, it's, it's, it's, it's at the very least that intention is coloring this, the experience of the words. There, there aren't just words that are spoken. There, there's a mean, there's an intention behind the speaking of them. And I'm aware of that intention, although I haven't, like, I haven't directed my own consciousness to the fact that I have this intention. But the intention is *there* for sure. And I'm not saying this very well cuz this, this case feels different from some of the others where I've said many times throughout the times, well, if you were to stop me and ask me what was going on, I'd be able to tell you that. This doesn't feel like that.

54:11 It's true that if you were to stop me and ask me, *why did you say that?* I would say something like, I was trying to calm him down so he would stop saying this over and over again. That, that's true. But that was more, I was more aware of that in the moment as well. It wasn't just the sort of thing, it wasn't just the sort of thing where if you had asked me, I would've been able to tell you that's what was going on. There was some awareness of it. But I hadn't formulated that to myself. It wasn't like I said, *well how can I calm him down? Oh, maybe what I could do is I could acknowledge him a little bit and say something*. Right. None of that, like deliberation went on.

54:44 But the, but the idea behind that deliberation was present. I get, the best I can say is it's like what you say to a young child when you're trying to calm them down. Like you, there's a way of saying that that is, *I am now trying to calm this person down*. Even though like when the child is screaming at two o'clock in the morning, you don't say to yourself, *well gosh, this child is screaming, how might I calm it down? Oh, maybe I'll do this*. Like, that's not how it goes. You just instinctively do something, but you'll also at the same time know what you're doing.

55:16 RTH: So what I would say about this is that the, the, the [chuckles] philosophers make a big deal about intention, and sometimes intention is explicitly present. Most times it's not explicitly present, anymore than when Agnes was asking the question, she didn't think, *well I'm gonna ask this particular kind of a question because I'm gonna try to figure out what...* There was no thought process like that. She was interested in Michael's experience and was trying to get at, at that. And I think the same thing is, is happening here.

55:45 So it's a reasonable question to ask whether the intention is explicit, but the fact that Michael has a difficult time answering that has to, has to be taken as an answer of, well he was saying it in the manner of trying to calm him down, but that does not mean that there was a specific intention to calm him down.

56:03 Michael: Or at least I wasn't aware of such an intention.

56:06 RTH: Yeah, exactly. Not an *experienced intention* is what I meant to say. If, if I didn't say that. [Michael: Right.] Not an *experienced intention*.

56:12 Michael: And I think that's the way Agnes put it. I just struggled to answer. [RTH: Right.] But, um, yes, that not an experienced intention, but the, but the act was intentional and it kind of felt of, felt intentional even though I wasn't reflecting on its intentionality. [laughs]

56:28 RTH: And that I think is fair enough. That's all in the realm of experience. [pause]

56:36 AB: You go ahead, Russ.

56:36 Michael: I'll be better at answering that one next time. Sorry.

56:36 Russ comments: That is the point of, and illustrates the necessity of, the iterative process.

56:47 RTH: So I think I'm good about that. If everybody's good about that. I'm good. So it's 1:57, we've got four beeps. Do we wanna do one more beep? or..

56:57 Michael: Uh, I can do one more. I'm, I'm done for the day, to be honest, I've been working since five o'clock this morning.

57:03 RTH: Shall we do one more?

57:04 Michael: Sure,

57:05 RTH: Sure. Let's do one more.

Sample 3.5 discussion starts here

57:06 Michael: All right. We'll just do the next one. Agnes already knows about this one, actually, if you read your email, um. [AB: I did! (laughs)] So this is, this is weirdly self-referential [laughs]. Um, I still don't know what to make of this, but, so I'd gotten to the office, I was writing email to Agnes about the workshop that we were talking about a little while ago. And specifically I was writing to her cuz we're trying to figure out the schedule of the workshop, and I was literally typing the letters "DES" (because I was talking about your session, Russ), and I literally was typing the words DES and I was also saying those words. I was saying all of the words. I was typing an email to Agnes and I was saying the words as I was typing them, and I was in the middle of saying, or saying and typing "DES" when the beeper went off. So that was weird.

58:11 Um, the, I would say that there was very little visual awareness of what was going on. My, I was looking at the screen and I could, I could see the letters "DES," they were present to me, but I was much more, I was much more focused on the auditory thing. So the, the, the, the cognitive, mental, whatever, process that was going on, as I was saying the words, and as I was saying them, I was typing them and the, the presence, their presence on the screen was there, they were present to me on the screen. But that this is like a 80—20, 90—10 kind of a thing. The visual thing

was *not* a very important part of the experience, but the *saying* of what I was typing was. So I was composing by speaking basically.

59:02 Um, the other thing that I, that that what I was aware of at the time, two other things I was aware of at the time. So that wasn't a 90—20 or 90—10, maybe that was a 70—10. And there's two other tens. The, the, the HVAC system in my office was rattling and I was aware of that rattling going on. Um, I'd re, I'd only gotten to the office recently, so I hadn't sort of backgrounded that noise yet. Um, and then the other thing is I have a bad habit of picking the skin off of my thumb. And I was doing that. So I was aware of my fingernail kind of grabbing some skin off of my thumb, specifically my right ring finger. My right hand has sharp fingernails on it cuz I play guitar. And that's, that's what leads to this problem [laughs] of using my sharp fingernails to scrape skin off my thumb. And I was doing that. Sorry, I know that's kind of gross, but sorry, we're being honest here.

1:00:05 RTH: So my right ring finger,

1:00:07 Michael: My right ring finger was scraping, scraping the inside of my left thumb.

1:00:12 RTH: My left thumb

1:00:13 Michael: Yeah. I have a Band-Aid on it now. [shows the Band-Aid] [laughs]

1:00:15 RTH: Okay, so I'm, I'm using this hand to scrape this hand. [Michael: Yes.] Okay. And that's directly present to me. That's not just happening automatically?

1:00:23 Michael: That is, No, I'm aware of it at the moment. Yeah. Okay. But, uh, it's, it's a nervous habit of some sort. At least that's what my mother used to say. Um, but I was aware of it in the moment, but the main thing I was doing was speaking,

1:00:39 RTH: Well, let's do the speaking first because that's the most important thing. So I am, this is a *speaking* experience. I am *speaking* "DES."

1:00:47 Michael: Yeah. So going back to our earlier distinction, this is almost all speaking, the hearing part is basically not there.

1:00:54 RTH: And do I know whether I'm speaking this aloud or not?

1:00:56 Michael: No idea.

1:00:58 RTH: Okay. And, and I can *say* that this is part of the planning of the workshop and Ds and the workshop. And so I obviously, I know all that stuff is, is happening. Is that present to me at the moment of the beep? Obviously it's in my neurons in my mind [Michael: Yeah, I'm trying to think.] or whatever, but whether it's experience is another story.

1:01:27 Michael: It's not *all* present, but what is, but the, the, the, the specific part of the workshop that I'm talking to Agnes about in that moment, *that* is present to me. Cuz I'm

thinking through like how the scheduling is gonna work. And so that, that aspect of what I'm doing is present to me.

1:01:47 RTH: In what way?

1:01:49 Michael: Um, it's a kind of, as a kind of, um, puzzle almost, uh, right? I have these, I have these pieces [laughs], the different things that are gonna have to happen. And I'm trying to put them together in a way that makes sense for the scheduling. And so that whole puzzle is it kind of in my mind, but I'm focused on one piece of the puzzle at the particular moment. But I understand that it's a piece of this bigger puzzle. And the piece I'm focused on at the moment is when are we gonna do this particular thing?

1:02:28 RTH: And, and by *puzzle*, do you mean this entirely metaphorical? Or do you mean this as a visual thing? Or do you mean this as a

1:02:35 Michael: It's not visual. No, no. I mean it metaphorically.

1:02:38 RTH: So it's some somehow present to me that I am rearranging these in things that are gonna have to happen on the, in the, in the workshop.

1:02:49 Michael: Yeah.

1:02:49 RTH: And I'm focused on this particular one of them, which is the DES one, I guess. And, but I can't really say more about it than that. It's not like I *see* a calendar. It's not like I feel the presence of *Russ* here and *somebody else* over there or

1:03:05 Michael: Whatever. No, it's, it's very, it's much more abstract than that. It's really, it's almost like an abstract logic puzzle, you know, the sort of thing where you like, you know, well, not, that was a bad example I was about to give, it's almost more like an abstract logic puzzle that I'm trying to solve. And I, there's no visual component to it,

1:03:21 RTH: But somehow present to me at the moment. [Michael: Yes.] And the dis, the distinction that I would like to make here, I think is between the, the driving, you were... We had a previous beep a couple beeps ago where you were driving and you were pretty confident that there were, that was not in your experience at all. Clearly you were skillfully doing, doing that. You were not running into cars and you were making the corners and stuff or whatever. But, uh, but without that being in your directly apprehended experience. You seemed pretty confident about that.

1:03:48 Michael: Yes. I, I am confident about that.

1:03:50 RTH: And, but this is not like that. It's not like I'm driving my way through the schedule. There's something about the schedule that's actually present to me. That's a question.

1:04:01 Michael: Yes. The, the, the, the puzzle nature of the task was present to me in the moment.

1:04:07 RTH: Okay. But as an abstraction, not as a specific of this needs two hours or that needs this afternoon or whatever. It was not...

1:04:16 Michael: No, it was, it was more of an as an abstraction. That's right. I mean, yeah. That's, that's right.

1:04:28 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm good about that aspect. You happy with that, Agnes?

1:04:32 Michael: I'm happy with that.

1:04:33 RTH: And then there's two other pieces, though. One we started to talk about was the scraping of the skin. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] And I wanted to know whether this was about the thumb? Or about the ring finger) Or both, or neither? The scraper or the scrapee, I guess you would say.

1:04:52 Michael: It's kind of about both. Because the feeling I, I, I can be more specific. It was, I had managed to get the fingernail underneath (I know this is kind of gross, sorry) the fingernail underneath some skin. And I could feel the fingernail underneath the skin. And the next thing that's gonna happen is I'm gonna pinch, pinch that piece of skin with my fingernail and pull it off. But that hadn't, that hadn't yet happened.

1:05:23 RTH: But this is a, this is a specific thing, I gather. This is a, this is not just a *mindless* scraping, this is a *particular* scraping, even though it's only 10% of my experience.

1:05:35 Michael: Yeah. And maybe 10% is too low, but, but I'm gonna stay with 10%. But it, it's not a, it is not mindless. I mean, sometimes I do it mindlessly, but it was not mindless in this moment. I was *aware* that I was doing it in the moment.

1:05:48 RTH: And the, and it sounds to me like this is more about the act of *doing* it than about the act of it *being done to me*. Is that true?

1:05:58 Michael: That's a, that's a good distinction. I would say *yes* to that.

1:06:10 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm good about that.

1:06:14 AB: Yeah. I'm good too.

1:06:15 RTH: And then there's the rattle from the a A/C.

1:06:18 Michael: Yep.

1:06:19 RTH: And I hear it.

1:06:20 Michael: That's it. I just hear it. Yeah. I, I only recently entered the room and usually it takes a little while for that thing to kind of fade away. I always noticed that when I first walk in the room, and it takes a while for it to kind of disappear from my consciousness. And it had not yet disappeared.

1:06:37 RTH: And so these things I gather, I'm gathering as a question as, as mostly always. But, uh, these are sort of three separable or separate strands of my experience. I'm saying "DES" and puzzling through the puzzle—that seems like one strand; and I am picking at my skin—that's another strand; and I'm hearing the A/C.

1:06:57 Michael: Yeah. I don't think there's any real connection between these two things. Okay. Three things. Yeah. They don't feel connected. Anyway.

1:07:10 AB: Okay.

1:07:14 RTH: Then I think I'm good with about that. Agnes, you good about that?

1:07:17 AB: I'm good about that too.

1:07:20 RTH: And we got the five beeps in an hour and eight minutes.

1:07:23 Michael: The record!

1:07:25 RTH: Which is a record. And, and I, I would say these are the complex experiences. It takes, this is how long it takes. And, uh,

1:07:32 Michael: Well I need to have more, like maybe I should just have more early-morning experiences where I can just say, I wasn't really thinking anything and nothing was really happening. [they laugh]

1:07:46 RTH: If the goal, to the extent,

1:07:48 AB: [inaudible] experiences, Michael! [laughs]

1:07:51 RTH: To the extent that the goal is to get to six, that would be really good. [they laugh]
1:07:59 And, but I, I would also, I would also say it seems to me that we're doing a pretty good job of a, of asking and answering questions. We're, ...

1:08:07 Michael: I, I feel like my, I'm getting a little better at it, or I'm, yeah, maybe. You can tell me if I'm wrong about that. But it,

1:08:13 RTH: It, it seems like we're, we are learning to make careful distinctions that seem like the right distinctions between what is experienced and what is background. And

1:08:25 Michael: Yes. It, it feels like I'm certainly getting clearer on those, on those things, and better able to make those kinds of distinctions. Or maybe, maybe more relevantly, to *perceive* them.

1:08:40 RTH: Yeah.

1:08:41 AB: Or both.

1:08:42 RTH: And talk about ‘em.

1:08:43 Michael: And talk about ‘em.

1:08:44 RTH: Right. And, and with, and talk about ‘em with confidence. All the, all, all these things are skills, I think. And the, to the extent that we make them explicit, that changes, [Michael: Yeah.] changes, changes everything, probably. So shall we do it again?

They compare calendars

1:09:20 RTH: So in a, within a couple of hours (it takes me a couple hours to make the video) I will make the video and send it to Agnes, and then Agnes can either look at it or not and ask whatever questions she wants, either about a specific thing, you know, at this particular time. And I will do that as it takes, takes me a couple hours to make those things. And then

1:09:20 AB: Sounds good.

1:09:21 RTH: And then, and then in that context, we’ll figure out when to do it next.

1:09:25 AB: Okay. Sounds good.

1:09:27 Michael: Okay. Sounds good. Thanks both.

1:09:28 RTH: See you later. [AB: Bye.] Bye.

1:09:28 Russ comments on discipline

- We left unexamined the event in the Whole Foods freezer aisle that made Michael angry (26:58).
- We didn’t inquire about the voice’s name (not “John”) and why he didn’t wish to use that name (45:39).
- We didn’t discuss Michael’s guitar interests or fingernails, even though Russ is a serious classical guitarist with sharp fingernails of his own (59:02).

Why not? Because DES is relentlessly interested in directly apprehended experience, and that requires discipline.

RE “There’s a whole backstory to this, which I’m not gonna tell you, at least not right now. If you ask me, I’ll tell you” (26:58)

Were Michael to describe the freezer-aisle event, that description would be a combination of what actually happened, Michael’s interpretation of what happened, Michael’s history of such happenings, and so on—it would involve the whys and wherefores of the situation. There is a sense in which that may be important, but that importance is an admixture of very heterogeneous impure affairs.

For the sake of argument, I make up a concrete story of what happened—let’s say that he saw a mother scolding her child for complaining that she didn’t buy ice cream cones. [I have no idea whether that is actually close to the event Michael saw, but I think it will suffice

here.] To understand the why and how of Michael's anger (which I think is the usual reaction), you would have to understand what Michael thinks about child rearing; how Michael dealt with such situations in general; how Michael dealt with one similar situation where he lost his temper (or didn't lose his temper) with his own daughter (I have no idea whether such an event ever occurred), how he reacted to the Mother's tone of voice and to the child's screaming, the events of his own childhood, and so on and so on, without end.

Contrast that with what the interview actually did: it zeroed in on Michael's directly apprehended visual experience—a converging seen passageway somehow visually apprehended (but not actually seen) to be blocked—and a crawling anger swatted away. That is (or those are), to be sure, a complicated experience, but it is hugely simpler than the whys/wherefores—all the aspects are directly apprehended. There are some important difficulties in this describe-the-directly-apprehended-experience to be sure (retrospection, interference by the beep, etc.), but I think they are orders of magnitude smaller than the difficulties (I think impossibilities, really) of understanding the whys and wherefores, which would require exploring his own parenting, his own experience as a child, a lifetime of chance encounters. Michael could invent a plausible story of what the significance of that scene was, and we could invent a seemingly kindred rapport-y understanding of that story, but that would mistake plausibility for fidelity, a misapprehension that I think is a fundamental mistake of psychological/philosophical analysis.

So DES sticks to what it has a chance of apprehending and describing with fidelity. Sure, I'd like to know what happened in the Whole Foods aisle—I like a good story as much as does the next guy. But I don't like it enough to pollute the chance that I have to hear some things from Michael with actual fidelity.

RE “Except I didn't say ‘John’. I said it's real name, which I'm not gonna say” (45:39)

Michael's experience is absolutely his own private property; I have no right to hear anything about it, ever. Anything I hear about Michael's experience is a privilege Michael absolutely owns and grants to me. Michael doubtless knows that I would like to know the voice's name, but he quite declaratively (“I'm not gonna say”) withholds that from me. Of course I would like to know the real name and why he doesn't say it, but it is none of my business.

One might think that it would add a smidge of fidelity to the account, but that is not really true. To the extent that you think knowing the name would improve fidelity, then you have some faith that your own personal associations to that name would match Michael's associations, and that those association would illuminate the experience. But that is the same kind of misapprehension that mistakes plausibility for fidelity.

RE “My right hand has sharp fingernails on it cuz I play guitar” (59:02).

It would doubtless be pleasant to share guitar interests with Michael, but I don't do it because I don't want those interests to distract from my more important (to me) interest, which is in Michael's inner experience.

Exercise for the reader (from 35:32)

Michael's original description of the head-rubbing was at 28:08. Look carefully at that description and color code what he says as being either a description of head-rubbing *behavior* (put that in red), a description of head-rubbing *experience* (put that in blue), or you're *not sure* (put that in purple). Leave black anything that is not relevant to the head-rubbing.

Russ's answer

28:08 Michael: Um, so the other thing that's happening is that there's a kind of slightly panicky, with my left hand brushing my head, [gestures a rapid, energetic brushing with his left hand of the top left of his head] my head like this, as if it's as if like a bug fell on your head and you almost like, without really thinking about it, kind of did the w-u-u-u thing, you know, where you kind of quickly do that. And that was in reaction to the feeling (I knew it wasn't this, I'm just telling you what it felt like), the feeling of like a spider with sharp feet crawling around your head. But actually that was *anger*. And I knew it was anger, but it manifested as something with sharp feet going like this. And it all happened very quickly. And I did the w-u-u-u thing to get it off.

The color coding demonstrates that, from Russ's point of view, there was *nothing* in Michael's opening description that was unquestionably about the *experience* of head rubbing. There was one phrase that *might* have been about the experience of brushing, but also *might* have been about the behavior of brushing, and either way, it is immediately doubly subjunctified ("a kind of" and "slightly"). There is one word ("panicky") that might suggest that he experiences something like panic, but that word might also refer to the sudden jerky nature of the behavior or a retrospective judgment about causation.

So I think it was quite possible (likely, if I had to bet) that Michael 28:08 is describing behavior that is not experienced—the behavior came out of him, to be sure, but his experience is of anger crawling on his head.

My guess (which is mind-read-y, and I happily acknowledge that I am no mind reader and apologize if I get it wrong) is that your "my understanding was that there was **some** kind of experience, no matter how minimal, since Michael mentioned it in his original description" reflects an Agnes-presupposition of some sort, because I think it was not true that Michael unambiguously mentioned head-rubbing *experience* in his original description.

This is a hugely important issue to me because I think a (or perhaps *the*) central skill of DES is recognizing when Michael is describing experience, and not confusing anything else with that.

Agnes's answer

My color-coding, which I did before looking at yours, turned out differently:

Um, so the other thing that's happening is that there's a kind of slightly *panicky*, with my left hand brushing my head, [gestures a rapid, energetic brushing with his left hand of the top left of his head] my head like this, as if it's as if like a bug fell on your head and you almost like, without really thinking about it, kind of did the w-u-u-u thing, you know, where you kind of quickly do that. And that was in reaction to the feeling (I knew it wasn't this, I'm just telling you what it felt like), the feeling of like a spider with sharp feet crawling around your head. But actually that was *anger*. And I knew it was anger, but it manifested as something with sharp feet going like this. And it all happened very quickly. And I did the w-u-u-u thing to get it off.

And it raises questions for me about what counts as a description of experience. For example, I had "it's as if like a bug fell..." in purple because the "as if" seemed to signify an attempt to describe experience. More precisely, is metaphorical language allowed in the description of experience? Also, "that was in reaction to the feeling..." seems to me to be ambiguous between describing the causal state of affairs (spider caused rubbing) and the experience of a reaction. Or is a reaction not the kind of thing we can experience? I marked this part in blue because of the parenthetical remark "I'm just telling you what it felt like". Finally, anger is typically something we experience, no?

RE "I am certainly not trying to presuppose anything!"

One never *tries* to presuppose—a presupposition comes *before* any kind of trying. A presupposition is a taken-for-granted-ness, of the same ilk that I drop my phone I suppose that *of course* it will hit the floor, not the ceiling.

Of course! This was meant to be a bit tongue-in-cheek. But what I am serious about was that I was genuinely trying to ask about what seemed to me at least not obviously something that Michael didn't experience.

Russ comments: RE "what counts as a description of experience... anger is typically something we experience, no?"

Yes, I think we agree that anger is experienced, and I think we agree that Michael's bug/anger was experienced. The distinction that this exercise was designed (skillfully or not) to expose was whether or how or to what extent the *behavior* (the w-u-u-u scrubbing) was experienced. That is, this exercise arose as a result of:

35:11 AB: Can I... Yeah. Can I ask about the experience of this [rubs above her head] bit?

I took you to be aimed at the *behavior* (the rubbing), and I took the structure of that question to incorporate the *presumption* that *there was an experience* of that rubbing. That is, you did *not* ask something like "Did you experience that rubbing?" or "Did you experience that rubbing or was it automatic?" or "Can I ask about whether there was an experience of this [rubs above her head] bit?" or "I know that sometimes behavior occurs without being noticed/planned/experienced—for

example, when you gesturally point with your finger when making a particular argument; the pointing just comes out of you while your experience is focused on the argument. Is the head rubbing like that—it comes out of you without being experienced? Or do you directly apprehend it?”

The exercise for the reader was designed to bring into relief the attending to what Michael *actually said* about the *experience of* his rubbing behavior. I think he said *nothing clearly* about it and *may* have said *something ambiguously* about it. But I think your question (Can I ask about the experience of this [rubs above her head] bit?) presumed either that he said something about it or he *must have had some experience about it* which he has not mentioned. I think that is not fair, and pressures Michael in a direction that is not warranted.

I am not a mind reader, so I don't know what Michael actually experienced about his behavior. I think it is entirely fair to ask what he experienced about it, as long as that asking does not push him in the direction of entering into a shared presumption that there *must be* some experience of the behavior.

Let me give a meta-characterization of the process of this exercise for the reader:

1. My presupposition-detector antennae jangle at 35:11—Agnes may presuppose that behavior is experienced.
2. When reviewing the video, my presupposition-detector antennae still jangle.
3. I create an exercise for the reader designed to elucidate/explore the distinction between behavior and experience
4. Agnes responds to the exercise, not making the distinction that I asked for but instead thinking about causation and the experience of anger, etc.
5. Russ responds to Agnes's response by clarifying the distinction between experience and behavior.
6. This is where we are now—Russ is commenting on steps 1-5.

I think (and have written pretty much about this) that presuppositions are (mini or maxi) delusions, where delusion is not merely ignorance, but false belief where ignorance would be better.

Therefore:

1a and 2a. If my presupposition-detector antennae are correct—Agnes does have a presupposition about the experience of behavior—then Agnes is delusional in this regard.

4a. If my presupposition-detector antennae are correct—Agnes is delusional in this regard—then Agnes could not possibly have responded to the exercise for the reader in a way that recognized and acknowledged fairly the distinction between experience and behavior. If Agnes had given a “good” (as I see it) answer to this exercise, then I would have recognized that my presupposition detectors had gone awry.

5a. So now I am continuing to clarify the distinction between behavior and experience, in the recognition that it is iterative all the way down.

If the violin instructor says “You need practice on your scales,” and in the next lesson you come in and play your scales skillfully, then the instructor was mistaken in the first place. If the instructor was right, then the next lesson has to be “you still need scale practice.”

I absolutely do not claim infallibility in my ability to detect presuppositions. I can say, on my side of the chasm, “I suspect Agnes has a presupposition operating,” where “suspect” should be taken as an explicit acknowledgement of my own limitations.

Agnes comments:

RE “But I think your question (Can I ask about the experience of this [rubs above her head] bit?) presumed either that he said something about it or he *must have had some experience about it* which he has not mentioned. I think that is not fair, and pressures Michael in a direction that is not warranted.”

As I say above, I presupposed that there was at least some experience, however minimal, because Michael used language that, to my untrained ear, can be interpreted as describing experience. It is still not clear to me why this is wrong. In particular, I still don’t understand the answers to these questions:

I had “it’s as if like a bug fell...” in purple because the “as if” seemed to signify an attempt to describe experience. More precisely, is metaphorical language allowed in the description of experience? Also, “that was in reaction to the feeling...” seems to me to be ambiguous between describing the causal state of affairs (spider caused rubbing) and the experience of a reaction. Or is a reaction not the kind of thing we can experience?

Moreover, I had in blue that Michael explicitly discussed the “feeling” of the spider, which Russ had in red. To me, the word “feeling” connotes experience rather than behavior. What am I missing here?

RE “4. Agnes responds to the exercise, not making the distinction that I asked for but instead thinking about causation and the experience of anger, etc.”

Actually, I am doing my best to distinguish between experience and behavior. I’m asking about causation and the experience of anger to try to better understand this distinction. I’m trying to better understand what kind of language is appropriately understood as describing experience, and about which phenomena are directly experienced as opposed to conceptualized after the fact.

Russ comments:

RE “I had “it’s as if like a bug fell...” in purple because the “as if” seemed to signify an attempt to describe experience. More precisely, is metaphorical language allowed in the description of experience?”

First, I like metaphors. I use metaphors. I think metaphors enliven language. *But* I think one has to be very clear about the metaphoricity of one’s expressions. It is not easy, but is necessary.

The “as if” in Michael’s bug example (sample 3.3) is a good example. In Michael’s at-the-moment-of-the-beep there was *no* as if: Michael felt anger; Michael felt sharp scuttling feet. It was *not* the case that Michael experientially felt *as if* a spider was running across his head. By contrast, *in reality*, there was no spider, and when Michael wants to explain *that* to us, *then* he can accurately say “I felt *as if* a spider was scuttling across my head.” That is, here, the *as if* belongs in the natural attitude, but *not* in the experiential world; said another way, the *as if*

belongs to the explanation, not to the description. Part of the bracketing of the natural attitude (that is, part of the epoché) is being absolutely clear about the realm in which the *as if* lives: Yes the *as if* lives in the natural attitude; No the *as if* does not live in the experiential world.

So the issue is *not* about whether it is okay to say “as if” or to employ metaphors. The issue is to keep entirely separate the natural attitude and the experiential.

RE “Also, “that was in reaction to the feeling...” seems to me to be ambiguous between describing the causal state of affairs (spider caused rubbing) and the experience of a reaction. Or is a reaction not the kind of thing we can experience?”

It is entirely *possible* to experience a reaction. The question is whether Michael *actually did* experience, at the moment of this beep, the reaction, and I think the answer is No. When Michael says “that was in reaction to the feeling,” the question is whether Michael was speaking in the describing-experience mode or in the natural-attitude-explanation mode. The clearer everyone is about the epoché, the easier such distinctions are to make.

RE “To me, the word “feeling” connotes experience rather than behavior.”

I agree, at least sometimes (including here). But the *feeling* was of *anger*, whereas the *behavior* was of *swatting/rubbing*. I accept that the feeling was experienced. The question at issue was whether the *behavior* was experienced. Those are two very different things, from my point of view.

RE “I’m trying to better understand what kind of language is appropriately understood as describing experience, and about which phenomena are directly experienced as opposed to conceptualized after the fact.”

That is an important task and worth working at. I worry a bit about your use of “kind of language.” If that suggests that this discrimination is an examination of words, as if one set of words describes experience and another set describes conceptualization after the fact, I think that is not true. Words are far more ambiguous than that. I do think that it is worth practicing how to differentiate those things, which often means asking directly about what the person intends, and then asking again, and again, until everyone is on board about the importance of that distinction and the how to make it clear to each other.