

Michael D.
Michael D. Interview 9
Sampling Day 9

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the March 5 interview with Michael that is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/gStVg_vztHA. 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.
- 0:03 RTH: So this is gonna be day 9.
- 0:07 Michael: Hmm.
- 0:09 RTH: Anything we should be talking about before we launch into beeps? [laughs]
- 0:14 Michael: Um, well, yeah, there's one thing I'm gonna tell you. I, I, I just made the executive decision five seconds ago. [RTH: Okay.] [laughs]. Um, so we've been talking about names and, uh, I've been feeling a little bit guilty actually, and, um, a, a little bit deceptive. And I don't like feeling that way. And I, so I went and talked to my friend Chris Tollefsen, who is, um, my friend [laughs], and, uh, got his permission to tell you all that the, the good, the good voice that we've talked about a few times.
- 0:50 RTH: [interrupts] So, so, so hang on. Before, before we do that. [Michael: Yeah.] I'm, so, I, I'm interested in knowing the end of this story, but I don't want you to feel obligated.
- 0:50 Russ comments: RTH wants Michael to be in control of the situation, and here wants to give Michael a second chance to think about whatever he is considering saying.
- 0:59 Michael: I, I, no, I, I, I... Well, do I feel obligated? I feel a little bit obligated, but not because, but it's not, I don't feel pressure from you [laughs].

1:08 RTH: Okay. That, that, that's really what I meant by pressure.

1:10 Michael: Okay. Um, the vo, the voice, the good voice, I don't remember. We gave it some random name, which I,

1:16 RTH: We called it *John*.

1:16 Russ comments: John's voice appears in samples 3.4 and 4.6. [See a related discussion in interview 6 at 25:39.]

1:18 Michael: Okay. Whatever it was. It's name is Chris, and it's, and it's called Chris because it's his voice. [laughs].

1:24 AB: Wow!!

1:25 Michael: [laughs]. Um, and

1:26 RTH: So Chris, so Chris is the, that you talked to is a real person...?

1:29 Michael: He's a real person, a good friend...

1:31 RTH: ...That's known to Agnes, apparently known to Agnes.

1:32 Michael: Chris is definitely known to Agnes.

1:35 AB: He's our colleague and he's great. So that's why I reacted the way I did, because that's kind of, that's kind of cool that Chris is a voice!

1:41 Michael: Um, he, he knows this of course, and I, I talked to him the other day and I said, Chris, I'm feeling a little bit guilty about not sharing this information, which might be considered relevant. Um, but I didn't want to do it without his permission. [RTH: Fair enough.] And he, he said that it was fine.

2:01 RTH: Okay.

2:02 Michael: Um, so we can call it Chris. I don't, um, yeah, we can. That's, that's who it is. [laughs].

2:07 RTH: Okay. And, and what, what I would say is that, that as a general rule, people who are involved in these studies are, are delighted to have them use their real names. And I, and people think that's a little bit remarkable, but I don't actually think of it as, as remarkable.

2:26 And I might explain why I think it's not remarkable. And that is that, that the, the effort that we are involved in here has, has to do with truth pretty close to a capital T. It's not all the way to capital T obviously, but, but we're trying to get Michael's experience *right*. Trying to get it in *high fidelity* without pinning him down to anything like a diagnosis or a score on a test or a, or whatever else.

- 2:55 Michael: Well, that's good. Cuz I have enough of that in my life!
- 2:57 RTH: Life. Yeah. And, and I, and I think people are, people are *justifiably reluctant* to be categorized into some, into some category or other, even if, even if that category is *deserved* for whatever reason, but because the category carries with it implications that are *not personally relevant* to Michael.
- 3:19 Michael: Right. All that is true. Yep.
- 3:22 RTH: But what we're doing here, I think is *totally personally relevant* to Michael. And, and, and, and the Michaels that I work with generally think, *well, that's fine. I don't, I don't really care whether people, I'm, I'm happy to have people understand what the real Michael is.* What disturbs me, most people would say, is when, when you say you remember this category, whatever that category is, then people draw inferences from that category. [Michael: Yes, they do.] and, and distort the, and distort the actual Michael. [Michael: Yep.] And, uh, [shrugs]
- 3:22 That is a hugely important observation, I think, close to the heart of what makes DES (a) important and (b) different from nearly all other methods used by scientists or other professionals.
- 3:56 Michael: That all, that all, it makes complete sense to me. Um, and the, I mean, I do think it's sort of, I mean, I don't know from my point of view, it's kind of relevant that it's his voice. Um, he's, he's been a friend for well over 20 years. Um, and that, that does, in ways that we've already talked about, it obviously colors my experience of that in a certain way. And I was, I, I was feeling like I was withholding that information. [laughs] I was withholding that information. [RTH: Right.] Uh, I also felt like I had good reasons to withhold it. But I was feeling a little bit, maybe not, deceptive isn't quite the right word, but not fully forthcoming, and that, that felt kind of icky to me. [RTH: Okay.] Um, anyway, that's where we are. Um, so we can call it Chris if we have, if we have need to call it anything in the future.
- 4:43 RTH: Okay. Well, I, I appreciate that.
- 4:45 AB: And, uh, I mean that also, I mean, for, for whatever it's worth that colors *my* understanding of your experience, assuming that it's not just Chris's voice, but that it talks the way Chris talks, and so forth. I mean, I don't know if that's an assumption I'm allowed to make. Probably not! But, um,
- 4:45 Russ comments: RTH is worried about that statement (that is, he would agree with AB's "Probably not!"); see the turns beginning at 5:17.
- 5:04 Michael: It, it doesn't quite talk the way he talks. [AB: Okay.] But, um, ...
- 5:08 AB: Maybe it colors my experience in a, in the misleading way then, I dunno.
- 5:11 Michael: Um, cuz it's not really his personality.

5:14 AB: Gotcha. It's just his voice.

5:16 Michael: It's just his voice. Yeah.

5:17 RTH: Okay. And, and I might, I might comment that the probably, and it is probably true, that the real Chris talks to the real Agnes in a different way than he talks to the real Michael.

5:28 Michael: That's almost surely true. Yeah.

5:30 RTH: And, and that, and that is why I *always* worry when people say, *oh, I can, I can now I can understand more about that* [AB: Mm!] because, because I don't think that's necessarily, I don't think that's necessarily true. Y'know, you talk to girls, talk to girls different from your talk to boys. You talk to long, long-term colleagues, longer, different from short term colleagues. Or *whatever*. All those things are...

5:30 Russ comments: One cannot assume that one's experience is the same as that of someone else. That is at the heart of the epoché. DES is epoché all the way down.

5:54 Michael: Yeah, that's, that's probably right. Um, I, I think Agnes and I probably have not the same, but similar relationships to Chris. I mean, I've known him for much longer than she has, but, um, and y'know, he and I have been through stuff that she and he have not been through, et cetera, [RTH: Yeah.] but, and vice versa, I'm sure.

6:14 RTH: And, and, and, and I would say what Agnes knows about Chris *is* going to color her [Michael: Yeah. I mean...] understanding. Every time you mention Chris [laughs], she, she hears *Chris* in a somewhat different way than you intend *Chris*. And that is *unalterably* true. Probably minorly so. Maybe majorly so in some ways I don't, that I don't actually know. But, uh,

6:45 Michael: Yeah. That, that's all fair. Um,

6:48 RTH: But we don't need to sh, we don't need to slide it under the rug. We should be explicit about that.

6:54 AB: That's, and I also, I mean, I think I agree that, um, Michael experiences a different version of Chris than I do, surely. But I also think there are some, there's some overlap between those versions. [RTH: Absolutely.] And we sometimes experience Chris together! [laughs] in fact! [they laugh]

7:16 RTH: Ab, absolutely.

7:18 Michael: All true. All true.

7:20 RTH: And, and it, and it is no doubt true that the overlap is greater, or I shouldn't say *no doubt*, I should say *probably* true that the overlap is greater than the idiosyncratic.

7:28 Michael: That seems like it pro it's probably right. Yeah.

7:31 RTH: But what, what I don't want us to do is to *assume* that that's the truth. [AB: Mm-hmm.] It's the, it *probably is* the truth. But DES tries to keep the, *probably is* separate from the *actually*.

7:45 Michael: Right, right. Okay.

7:52 RTH: So: On to beep number 1?

Discussion of sample 9.1 starts [here](#)

7:56 Michael: On to beep number 1, um, this is all this morning. Um, it was early morning at this point. I was actually, um, uh, I, I had *just* put the, the, I *just turned on* the, the, the beeper. And I kind of had, this is all context. I had kind of absent-mindedly started to put the, uh, the earbud in my right ear and then realized that it doesn't go in my, it's, it's a, it doesn't go in my right ear, it goes in my left ear. And, um, I had just, uh, said, "it fits in your left ear." And then I had just realized it's really early morning, I'm the only person awake right now. I, I wasn't sure if I had said that out loud or not, but I was worried that I had, which would've potentially, y'know, been disturbing to people trying to sleep around me. That's all background. Um, and then I said, uh, consciously inner, innerly, *not* out loud because of what had just transpired. Uh, "it's *eared not handed*." I don't know why I had that thought. But anyway, um, I, I said, "it's *eared not handed*." Um, and I was walking at that time and I was hearing my footsteps. Um, I think just as part of this general awareness of, of not making noise, I was hearing my own footsteps and I was hearing the dishwasher running. So the inner speech was definitely inner. It was consciously inner. And it was productive in the sense that I was saying the words. Uh, I was not hearing the words.

10:02 RTH: Okay. And, and is the inner speech the most prominent por, portion? Or the

10:08 Michael: Yes. The, the inner speech is the most prominent portion. That's what I was paying the most attention to, but I definitely was hearing the footsteps in the dishwasher as well.

10:15 RTH: 60—20—20? 70—15—15?

10:17 Michael: Yeah. That, that sounds, yeah, 60—20—20 is probably right.

10:21 RTH: Okay. And when you say that the, the speech was *inner*, do you mean that *as a fact* this was inner speech? Or do you mean that as an *experiential*? *I experience...*

10:33 Michael: It was experientially inner. I was *very consciously* making sure I said it only in my head and not out loud.

10:44 RTH: So not only was it experientially inner, it was experientially *premeditatedly* inner?

- 10:51 Michael: Yes! Or, uh, yeah. That, that's what I'm trying to say by *consciously inner*. Yes. I, I, I had, I was making sure that I did not speak out loud for fear of waking other people up and, and for fear that I had just spoken out loud, but I wasn't sure.
- 11:16 RTH: Okay. [pause] And so is the, is the premeditation a separate thing from the speaking? Or is it that I am...
- 11:29 Michael: No. No, it was just intentionally inner speaking.
- 11:33 RTH: Intentionally inner. Okay.
- 11:38 Michael: And it wasn't like a moment before where I said, *oh gosh, the next thing you say, you better make it not out loud*.
- 11:47 RTH: Okay. All right then. I'm good about that portion. Agnes, you got questions about the inner speaking?
- 11:51 AB: I, I have a question about the inner speaking that's kind of arising as a consequence of our conversation last time about the inner hearing. So last time, um, Michael said that with, with the cello example, there's experientially no difference for him between, um, hearing (sorry, that, this isn't...) hearing the cello as if there's a cellist in the room with him and what it would mean to *imagine* the cello. And then Russ in his comments, kind of gave an example of an, a different person who *is* able to imagine that. And we said that Michael doesn't have that distinction. Um, and I was wondering whether there is a parallel with innerly speaking. In other words, Michael, do you have a distinctive experience of innerly speaking that is different from outwardly speaking?
- 13:00 Michael: In this case? Yes. I, I should preface (well, it's too late for prefacing), I should say that, that that distinction that you're talking about, I don't feel like I have a full grasp of that. Um, I didn't feel like that when we talked about last time, I still don't feel that way. [AB: Mm-hmm.] But I can say, I can say with, with a great deal of confidence that there was no hearing involved here. So I, I am, I, I *know*, it's a fact of the world, that sometimes I speak innerly and, and by, and by that I mean just not outerly [laughs], um, and I hear it as well as if it were out loud. This was *not that* kind of experience. This was, there was no hearing at all involved here. I was just *thinking* the words, without... But I was thinking them in the cadence of normal speech. It wasn't like they were all present to me at once or something like that. So they came in an order, y'know, roughly, um, the, the correct amount of time, y'know, passing for each thinking of each word. But there was no auditory experience associated with that thinking at all. The only auditory experience I was having was the footsteps and the dishwasher. [AB: And that's...] Does that answer your question? Because I'm,
- 14:21 AB: I, I, yeah, I think it, I, I think it does actually. [Michael: Okay. Um, and that's, would you say that that's how y'know that it's inner like that it's]only innerly? Or do you

have like a, a an experience of the innerly-ness of the speech, um, that is distinct from just not hearing it also?

14:46 Michael: I don't think so.

14:47 AB: Okay.

14:50 Michael: Um, I, I'm not sure what it would, I'm not sure, and this may be related to my sort of lack of fully grasping what this distinction is supposed to be, but, um, I don't think there's some property of innerly-ness [AB: Mmm.] that is, that is attached to this experience. Maybe I'm wrong about that, but that's, I'm feel, I'm inclined to say that's, that's the case that it wa, there wasn't something like that. It *was* inner, it was not out loud, that's for sure.

15:25 RTH: So what I would say about this line of questioning is I, I thought about having this line of questioning myself, and I *didn't do it*, and I didn't... Well, I start, I, what I did, I did, I started, I *started* it and I asked him whether this was, whether the premeditatedly-ness of it, the intentionality, the intentionally-ness of it, whatever, was totally present to him, and his answer seemed to me to be compellingly, convincingly, Yes. This was on-purposely-inner speaking. And, and *then* I decided that the questions that Agnes wanted to know the answer to wa was, well, I was, I'm really interested in just regular inner speech when it's not premeditatedly inner, is there a characteristic of *that* kind of speech that would make it recognizably inner? And I thought I didn't, I didn't think I could get an answer to that, because *this* speech was premeditatedly inner.

16:22 Michael: Right. I actually, the, but that the, but putting the, the putting all that together is starting to, starting to clarify something that was unclear for me before. I, I stand by everything I said. I'm just telling you that this was a helpful five minutes of discussion for me.

16:44 RTH: And I don't doubt that at, at all. And, and I wouldn't surprise me if the conversations that we've been having are helpful to you in some, some way, because we, I think we're examining your inner experience in ways that probably are more careful than you've ever done, even though you've been living with it for however-many years.

17:06 Michael: I, I think at one, I think at one point, I, I forget a lot of things, but I didn't forget that you said I'm 50, so we're gonna say 50. [they laugh]

17:20 RTH: So does that answer your question, Agnes? Is that you, you satisfied with that?

17:25 AB: I'm not sure. Well, I think my question to Michael is answered. I'm not sure I fully understand your point. Is your point that.... I'm not understanding the connection between my question and your, um, the premeditated-ness of the experience somehow preempting my line, line of questioning for you. I don't know if that's important or if that's worth talking about, but I, I, I don't fully follow that.

- 17:55 RTH: I, I think it's, I think it's a fundamentally important question worth probably spending a minute to talk about. [AB: Okay.] So I, what I think is naturally occurring inner, inner speech recognized to be inner speech, recognized to be inner, is totally common among almost everybody, but maybe not among Michael. And it would be interesting, it would be totally interesting to me to understand how it is that most people can innerly speak and recognize that they're innerly speaking and Michael doesn't make that recognition. That would be totally interesting to me. *But* I also think that *premeditatedly* inner and *regular* inner are likely to be very different from each other. And that I *wouldn't* be able to find anything about the question that I thought would be *interesting*, which is sort of the naturally, *about* the naturally occurring innerlyness of speaking from, from asking about this particular sample. Because this particular sample was *not* naturally occurring inner. This was premeditatedly inner.
- 19:01 AB: So the *premeditatedly* inner speech is less interesting than the *naturally occurring* in speech.
- 19:08 RTH: Abso, absolutely!
- 19:09 AB: Okay. Okay.
- 19:11 RTH: And, and that, that, that's a big deal *for me* because most psychological (and philosophical, probably) investigations are about premeditatedly whatever. So we put people into a scanner and we say, "say 'elephant' innerly," and then we think, well, *that's inner speech*. Well, I just don't think that's true. I think saying, inner saying "elephant" on demand is not anything at all, like reminding myself I have to buy bread on the way home or whatever, which I might naturally do. But, but, uh, the business, the psychology (and the philosophy, I think) business doesn't make that distinction clear enough [coughs] for my taste. So...
- 20:00 Michael: I don't know that, so, so maybe you've already guessed this. I, I'm starting to understand these distinctions better as a result of this conversation. So that, so there's *that* helpfulness. I am not very confident that you're *ever* gonna get an answer to this question [laughs], because when I speak in a way to myself in a way that is inner, in the sense of not being outer, that's not, I'm not usually aware of that distinction unless I, *unless* it's premeditated. *Not premeditated* isn't quite the right word, but unless it's, unless it's self-conscious, unless I'm self, y'know, unless I'm *conscious in the moment*, like I'm *intentionally*, like I was in this moment, intentionally speaking. Now there is this difference. Um, I, I, and I can do it right now also because, um, I, I just did it. There you go. Um, when I think, when I consciously think, think to myself, "don't say these words out loud," I don't hear anything. I just think the words. And that's what happened in this case. I was thinking the words, but there was no auditory correlate of that at all. I don't know if that, I don't know if that's helpful or not, but,
- 21:27 RTH: And by in this case, you mean the, "it's eared not handed"?

- 21:31 Michael: Yes. Those, those were the words and the, the, they, they were, there was no auditory aspect to that inner speaking.
- 21:41 RTH: So what I, what I understood about that was that there was a spoke, a speak-y aspect of that. *I'm speaking those words*. I'm not just hearing, I'm not just *thinking* those words in a linear sense. I am experiencing myself as *speaking* those words.
- 21:56 Michael: Yes.
- 21:57 RTH: I'm *not* experiencing myself as *hearing* those words. And I *am intentionally* requiring myself not to utter them aloud.
- 22:08 Michael: Right. And I, I think it's likely, but I don't, I, I don't know, but, um, but I wa, I did just a moment ago, do a very quick experiment and think some words to myself. And, and I know I didn't say them out loud. And when I did *that*, now of course I was paying much closer attention [laughs] to what was going on, I noticed that there was some muscular movement in my mouth and throat that went along with those, thinking those words. I don't know if that, I, I can't say that was true in the, in the beep that we're talking about, cuz I wasn't paying any attention to that. Um, but it was true just now.
- 22:53 RTH: Well, that's a good, that's a good example of, of why I think this is a very important con, very important conversation that we're having in general. And that is that I think when, when *one does* an experiment, whether it's a natural experiment like you just did, or, or whether you're a, whether it's a premeditated experiment like in a scanner, "say 'elephant'," then people discover that there are, there is musculature involved. [Michael: Mm-hmm.] But I think that's artifact of the, of the premeditation.
- 23:17 Michael: Oh, that it very well could be. Yes.
- 23:19 RTH: And, and so I think most, most of the time when people innerly speak, there's no musculature involved, *I think*, for most people. And,
- 23:28 Michael: And I'm certainly not in a position to affirm or deny that. Yeah.
- 23:32 RTH: Whether, whether that's true for Michael, I don't know. And, and, and, *and* what I would say is, Michael, Michael, you started your last by preface your last salvo by saying, well, "y'know, you're not gonna find out the answer to your question." I, that, that question is not the most fundamentally interesting question to me. I'm, I'm *totally* interested in *what is distinctive about Michael's experience*. I'm *not particularly* interested in the speech aspect of it. I am, I am interested in the speech aspect of it to the extent that it is part of Michael's experience, but [Michael: Right.] but I'm, I would not be disappointed if I didn't get the answer to that, that particular aspect of it.
- 24:20 Michael: Right. Okay. That all makes sense.

24:26 AB: So part of, I mean, just to say why I raised the question that I did, despite the fact that it was premeditated. I mean, first of all, I think it's interesting, like the conversation we had last time about, um, the hallucinating the cello and what that's like for Michael, and the Michael saying, "I, I don't know what it means to imagine the cello as opposed to hallucinate it." Um, to me that raised a question about what is possible for Michael to experience in the realm of innerly speaking. Um, and so even though this is premeditated, I think it's interesting to know, like, okay, well in the case of the premeditated, does he have an experience, um, that is distinct from the experience of outwardly speaking? And that the,

24:26 Russ comments: It is certainly not my job to tell AB what to be interested in, or how to go about satisfying that interest. But I must say that the interest that she states here is, in my view, the source of much of what is unsatisfactory about psychological and consciousness science. Premeditated X is not X, and that is a hard thing to keep in mind.

Agnes comments: It seems to me that there are two senses of "premeditated" here that ought not to be conflated. I understood the sense in which Michael's inner speech is "premeditated" here was that he was intentionally trying not to speak out loud. This seems different than an artificial experimental setup in which one is told to say "elephant" innerly. And I was curious about what Michael's experience of inner speech is like in such a context. I am also interested in what his experience of inner speech might be in an "unpremeditated" context (whatever that might mean).

Russ comments: We have (a) the sampled situation, where Michael premeditatedly, explicitly ensures that he is speaking "it's eared, not handed." Now let's imagine (b) that Michael is driving by himself, naturally reviewing his DES instructions, and says "it's eared, not handed," and that his car has a recording device that allows him to rewind and discover that there was no aloud talking at that time. And further let's imagine (c) that Michael is a participant in an experiment where the experimenter instructs him to say, silently, "it's eared not handed."

I think we can agree that we have *in the real world* three different situations, all of which involve Michael silently saying "it's eared not handed." Two of them could be called "premeditated" (a and c); two of them could be called "natural" (a and b).

The epoché requires that we not be dazzled by the words "premeditated" or "natural." The fact that those words can each fairly be applied to pairs of our situations does *not* imply that Michael's experience is similar in those pairs. It also does not imply that Michael's experience is different in those pairs. The epoché requires that we bracket those pairs, remain indifferent to whether they are useful pairings, until we know Michael's experience well enough that it would not occur to us to wonder about these things (which may well be never).

Perhaps that is what Agnes was saying.

25:30 Michael: The answer is, is yes, because there's no, there's no auditory aspect to it.

25:34 AB: Yeah. Yeah. And then, and then of course, then there's a further question when it's the, the further question, which I think is the one that is more interesting to Russ, is

when it's *not* premeditated. So that's, anyway, that was what was motivating my question.

25:48 Michael: Got it. Is that fan too loud? [RTH: I can't hear it at all.] [AB: I can't hear it at all.] I'm, I'm really depressed at how warm it is. [laughs] I had to turn the fan on. I'm, I'm in my office and it's, this is the hottest room of the house and we don't have air conditioning in my house. So when the summertime comes, this office is *roasting* and I'm not ready for that!

26:15 RTH: Yeah. Getting cooler *here* today. So at the, at the same moment as this beep was at, at the same moment as this "it's eared, not handed" is spoken, I am also hearing my footsteps. [Michael: Yes.] And hearing and hearing the dishwasher. [Michael: Yes.] And those are both auditory experiences? [Michael: Yes.] So it's not like I am feeling myself walking; I am hearing my footsteps.

26:42 Michael: No, I wasn't really feeling the walking. I was just hearing it.

26:45 RTH: Okay. And is there anything more to be said about that?

26:53 Michael: Um, not, not by me.

26:55 RTH: Seems like, seems like this is na, natural hearing. I hear the footsteps as they are. I hear the dishwasher as they are.

27:00 Michael: Totally natural hearing. Yes.

27:04 RTH: Okay. And that's recognized as being outer. [Michael: Yeah.] And in the moment,

27:11 Michael: Yeah, I was, I was explicitly paying attention to sound right then because of my concern for the sleeping people in the house.

27:19 RTH: So there might be some premeditated-ness that seeps into this pa aspect of the experience.

27:25 Michael: Well, there's certainly some intentionality. Like I was, I was conscious of the noise that I was making, and therefore just conscious of whatever noise there is, period.

27:34 RTH: Okay. Fair enough. Then I'm good about number 1. [AB: Me too.] Number 2.

[Sample 9.2 discussion starts here.](#)

27:40 Michael: Okay. Number 2. Um, I was sitting on a stump in my yard, a recently, well, the stump has been there for a long time, but it hasn't been a stump until recently. [laughs] It was part of a tree. Um, and, um, I was thinking of sending my son to the hardware store to get some borate cuz I'm contemplating possibly trying to preserve this stump, cuz I kinda like it. And I, so, but I, I wanted to be able to, I wanted to be sure that they had it. So I was on my phone, I was, I was, I was heading in my car when it thought, when, when it occurred to me, maybe I'll send him to the store. So I sat

down on the stump, was on my phone on the website of the hardware store, and looking to see if they had borate. And it was, I was having trouble navigating the website.

28:28 And I had, just before the beep, I had seen there, there was a sentence, (uh, and I couldn't get it back when the, after the beep happened. So I'm not exactly, I wasn't, this is, this is all right before the beep. I wasn't, I'm not, I'm not a hundred percent sure that this is the correct sentence,) but it was something to the effect of "Here's what professionals who searched for borate bought." And I was annoyed with that and annoyed with their crappy website. And I'm sorry that I, I said something nasty at that point. I said, "Fuck you!" while I was closing the browser. I don't know who I was saying it to, but I was saying it in the general direction of the hardware store. Um, and that's it. That's all that, that's all that was in my experience was the closing of the browser. I, y'know, tapped, I had tapped on my phone to close to close it while I was saying that.

29:26 RTH: So I say, "Fuck, fuck you" at the moment of the beep. That's what's, that's what's said.

29:26 Russ comments: RTH and AB have been alternating being the primary interviewer, so RTH here infringes on AB's opportunity. I'm no mind reader, even of RTH, but I suspect RTH's motivation was to ensure that "Fuck you" gets said by the interviewer matter-of-factly very early in the questioning. Michael had apologized for saying "fuck" in the first place, and I think RTH's aim here is to convey that he is interested in Michael's experience, regardless of the language necessary to describe it. That is, he wishes to convey by his actions that Michael's apology is not necessary.

29:29 Michael: Yeah, the beep happened, like, I think right in the middle of that. Yeah.

29:33 RTH: Okay. And, and that is spoken.

29:40 Michael: Yes.

29:41 RTH: Aloud or innerly?

29:42 Michael: Uh, dunno, but I, I both, I, sorry, I I haven't answered all the, I I know some of the questions and I've been trying to answer 'em ahead of time. I, that was *spoken* and I *heard* it, whether it was, I was outside at this point, so I wasn't worried about sleeping people and I had stopped worrying about making sound. So I don't know if it was out loud or not out loud.

30:08 RTH: So the issue for me, for *me*, for me is not so much whether it actually is out loud or not out loud, but whether you *experienced it* as being,

30:17 Michael: I definitely experienced it as being out loud. I mean, maybe we should be a little bit careful about this though. What I mean is I *heard* those words and I heard them *auditorily* in the same way that I would hear them if I were to say them right now *out loud* into this microphone. But when I experienced out loud speaking *as out*

- loud*, that's different because in, because when I know that I'm speaking out loud, like right now, well, well, it's more complicated than that.
- 30:52 Supposing I'm quiet for a while and then I wanna say something to you and I, and I want it to be out loud cuz I want you to hear it. I will pay attention to the kind of my mouth and my throat [gestures to the region of mouth and throat] as a way of just monitoring *that was out loud*.
- 31:12 I wasn't doing that. Right. So, so like, conscious, intentional, (I know that's not what you're interested in, but I'm just telling you this) conscious, intentional, out loud is one way, and let's call it *happens to be* out loud. [laughs] is a different thing because the latter does not involve me paying attention to the out loudness of it, especially what's happening here in my body.
- 31:38 The other thing I, the other thing I started to say and then stop, but I get, maybe I need to say it is: So right, so in this conversation, for example, I'm not, it's not that I'm constantly monitoring. Once I've kind of consciously turned that switch on, I don't have to keep paying attention to my mouth unless I have a moment of doubt. So, so knowing that I'm talking to you all knowing that there's a microphone in front of me and I have to actually make the air vibrate in order for the message to get to you, I'll start, y'know what, whenever we started half hour ago, I'll, I will say to myself, this is out loud now, and I'll monitor here to know that I'm saying it out loud, but I don't have to *keep* monitoring. Like, once I've started doing that, it just keeps happening. Unless I have a moment of doubt, or if I'm quiet for a long time, then I may have to think about it again explicitly. So the explicit, let this this be out loud thought happens at the beginning, and there may be moments where it has to happen again, but typically, no.
- 32:46 So for example, when I'm teaching a class as I will be in an hour and a half, as I'm walking into the classroom, I will, I will say to myself, "this has to be out loud," and I'll monitor the very beginning of the class, but then I don't have to keep monitoring it. It just happens naturally after that. Why did I say all that? This was, this was *not* like that. I was *not* monitoring whether it's out loud or not, but I definitely heard the words.
- 33:18 RTH: So let me see, let me see.
- 33:20 Michael: Maybe I made It worse. I don't know.
- 33:20 RTH: Let me see what I understand about that. No, I, I think, I think this is very helpful to me. So what there is, is there's *intentionally out loud*, which begins with a mon, a monitoring of my [gestures near his chin]
- 33:34 Michael: My, my jaw and my, and my voice box. [gestures near his chin]
- 33:39 RTH: Okay. And then there is *intentionally silent*. And then there is *indeterminately aloud and silent* where I don't monitor. And maybe it's, maybe it's aloud, maybe it's not, I don't really know.
- 33:59 Michael: Right. And I, I mean, I do know from experience that sometimes it's one and sometimes it's the other. That I know just, uh, as a matter of fact about my personal history in the world.

34:10 RTH: But at the, at, at the particular moment, it doesn't occur to me... If, if, if it didn't occur to me to put it into this aloud category, then it wouldn't appear, wouldn't occur to me to monitor whether it was [Michael: Correct.] or to recognize whether it was aloud or not.

34:25 Michael: Correct.

34:27 RTH: So I can put it, I can put it into either category. If I put it into the aloud category, I'm gonna monitor my vocal apparatus...

34:36 Michael: At least initially. Yes.

34:37 RTH: At least initially. Okay.

34:43 Michael: And that, that, that's actually also true if I'm gonna put it into the *not* out loud [laughs] category. If I, if I'm intentionally like in the first beep, if I'm intentionally putting it in the *not* out loud category, I'm also gonna monitor to make sure I don't say it out loud. But the difference there is if I intentionally put something into the *not out loud* category, I don't hear it. I think that's true in general. And I know it's true of the first beep that we talked about today.

35:14 RTH: So the first beep that we talked about, the speaking aspect of it was "it's eared not handed."

35:20 Michael: Correct. Those were the words.

35:21 RTH: That was intentionally...

35:22 Michael: That was intentionally not out loud,

35:24 RTH: ...intentionally not out loud. And we didn't talk at that time that I recall about *well, I monitored my vocal apparatus to ensure.*

35:35 Michael: Um, but yeah, I, I, I was, I was paying attention, but it, it's true that I was paying attention to those things, but I didn't think of that as, I just, I guess I just thought of that as kind of wrapped up in the I'm doing this intentionally, intentionally,

35:49 RTH: Intentionally, premeditatedly, intentionally. What that means is, at least in part, I'm gonna monitor my [Michael: Yes. Yes.] vocal apparatus. Got it.

35:59 Michael: But I wasn't, I, I guess in part, cuz nothing was actually happening there, there was, that wasn't like motion in my mouth or a feeling in my voice box was not part of my experience because those things weren't happening.

36:10 RTH: Right. So I was, but I somehow, I, I probably habitually or whatever, was monitoring that stuff to make sure that I was successfully [Michael: Yes.] accomplishing what I was premeditatedly setting up to do.

36:25 Michael: Exactly. Yes.

36:27 RTH: Okay. And that I'm guessing is the answer, is the answer to the question that Agnes was asking in the ballpark of that, anyway,

36:38 Michael: Maybe. So I, I'm, I'm terrible at remembering these things. I'd have to go back and hear the question again.

36:45 RTH: But we're on, we're on, we're onto number two, which is "Fuck you." And, and I, I think I stepped on Agnes's question. So these, this is Agnes's beep if she wants it.

36:54 AB: [laughs]. Um, I mean, I think you asked all the questions that I wanted to ask about.

37:00 RTH: Yeah, sorry. Sorry about that. I can, [AB: That's okay.] I, I get carried away!

37:04 AB: That's okay. That's okay. [laughs]. Um, I guess

37:07 Michael: But you made a, you made a poem in the, in the process, so that's good. [pause] No one else picked up on that.

37:13 AB: No, I missed it. Sorry. The poem?

37:15 Michael: "We're on to number 2, which is fuck you."

37:17 AB: [laughs]. Oh, yes. [laughs].

37:19 Michael: Sorry. I, I'm, I'm, I'm hyper attentive to these things. Sorry, I shouldn't have said anything. Go on.

37:24 AB: No, it's good. It's good. I like it. Um, so I am curious about what is part of the, like the experience, (I can't remember how Russ puts it), but the experience in question the one, the moment before the beep, um, you mentioned that there's the, that you saw, "here's what professionals who search for borate bought" and that, um,

37:55 Michael: That was before. I would say

37:57 AB: That's, so that's, that's not part of the, that's

37:59 Michael: By our usual reckoning. I think that's not part of the experience.

38:01 AB: That's part of the background. [Michael: Yeah.] Um, and so, and then was the closing of the browser, was that part of the Yes,

38:09 Michael: I was doing that at the same time that I was saying, yeah.

38:12 AB: Okay. Okay. And, um,

38:16 Michael: That was kind of the, the physical manifestation of my words was making them go away.

38:22 AB: And was that part, was, was the prominent thing the “fuck you,” or

38:28 Michael: It was all one thing. I, I don’t think anything, I don’t think anything was more prominent than the other. It was okay. It was a gesture and words that all were pointing at the same target.

38:40 AB: Was the closing of the browser window. Um, was that, uh, were you experiencing that as like a tactile thing?

38:50 Michael: No, I was experiencing that as *close the window*. [AB: Okay.] Yeah. That’s, that’s, that was the nature of the experience. It was so, it, that’s conceptual, I guess, rather than perceptual. Uh, obviously I was touching the phone, but I wasn’t really feeling my, my, I don’t even know what, what finger I used to do it. Um, that wasn’t really the part of what I was aware of in the moment. I was aware of *closing* the window.

39:22 AB: So when you say that you were aware of closing the window, were you aware of like your agency in making the window close? Is, is that

39:22 Russ comments: This question is about what I call meta-experience—it asks, Were you aware *of Michael* as Michael was closing the window? I think meta-experience questions are risky unless there is some warrant from what Michael has already said (which I don’t think there is).

See also Michael’s reply to my 39:38 comment and my reply to that. Agnes’s and my replies here were written independently of Michael’s 39:38 comment, which arrived later.

Agnes comments: That is not at all what I meant. I was doing my best to invite Michael to say more about his experience of closing the browser window. I first asked him whether it was a tactile experience. The follow-up here was intended to better understand Michael’s response to that question. When he said he was aware of “*closing* the window,” to me, that indicated an awareness of his act of closing the window. That is all I meant – nothing about Michael as Michael closing the window.

Michael comments: [My eyes are swollen nearly shut right now, so apologies for any weird typos, etc.] It’s been a while, now, but I think I understood Agnes’ question in that way. To be entirely open about it, I say that not because I remember, but because I believe that if I had thought that the question was inviting me to say that I was explicitly considering myself, qua agent, in the act of closing the window, I wouldn’t have assented. That kind of mental activity (thinking about myself as an agent who is doing something) feels very rare to me (as an unprompted, spontaneous, thought), bordering on non-existent.

Russ comments: To speak adequately about meta-experience is very difficult, and regardless of what AB *meant*, I think what she *said* warped the conversation in the direction of meta-experience. In the present situation, there are at least these three possible experiences, which I will schematize as shown. Michael's experience is schematized in blue in those schematics.

In Panel 1, Michael's experience is aimed at the window, which he sees closing as if it were closing on its own or that someone else is closing it. The by-itself-ness is a feature of the seen closing.

In Panel 2, Michael's experience is aimed at the window, which he sees closing under his own control. The under-my-control-ness is a feature of the seen closing.

In Panel 3, Michael's experience is aimed at Michael himself, that is, aimed at the closer. The window-ness is a feature of the closer.

Panel 3 is the meta-experience panel: panel-3's experience is aimed self-ward, rather than window-ward. The first two panels are aimed at the window, and are therefore *not* meta-experience.

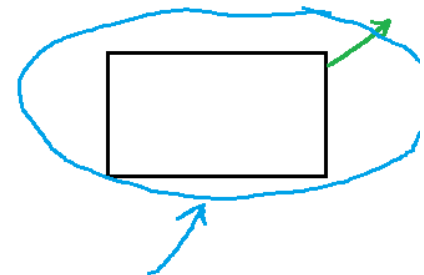
When AB asked, in 39:22, "were you aware of ... your agency in making the window close?", the "your agency" to which she refers is Michael's agency, which is an aspect of Michael. That makes AB's question a panel-3 kind of question—she is inquiring about an aspect of Michael. The problem occurred when AB nounified *agency*; it becomes *Michael's* agency, a property of Michael.

It would be okay (if a bit pedantic) for AB to have asked whether Michael's experience was of the window *agentically* closing, because *agentically* is an adverb, is therefore a feature of the action, a feature of the closing window. That would emphasize or acknowledge that Michael's experience is of the action, *not* of the actor.

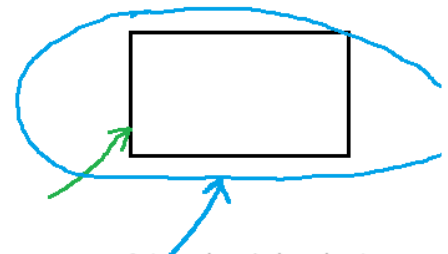
In short, I think there was no agency as a noun. One could fairly say that there was agentic action, where agentic is an adjective.

Yes, I frequently say that "DES is *not* about the words," and what I am writing here is a very specific word quibble. DES is not about the words in the sense that our job is *not* to *interpret* Michael's experience on the basis of the specifics of *his* word choices. But DES *is* about the words in the sense that the words that *we* use do influence what Michael might be inclined to say.

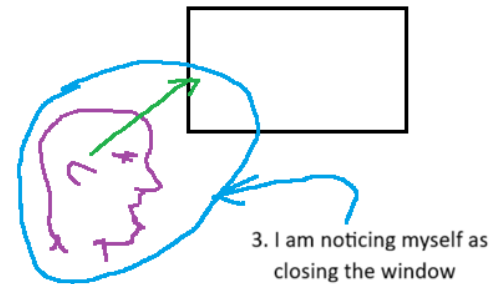
AB's nounifying is a big deal here because AB's question about *agency* (as a *noun*) is a (panel-3) meta-experience question as stated (regardless of what was



1. I see the window closing



2. I see the window that I am closing



3. I am noticing myself as closing the window

meant), and thereby pushes Michael to respond (in his upcoming 39:38) in a way that suggests that his beeped experience was about *Michael* rather than about the window. He says “my own *ego* ... was very present to me.” *Ego* is another nounification of an experiential aspect that is actually adjectival or adverbial. That is, we are now talking about a thing (*ego*) that is a piece of Michael, rather than describing the experienced movement (which has an agentic characteristic). That is, Michael here is likely talking about *ego* not because he experienced *ego* but because AB nounified agency.

See the comments at 39:38 and 40:44.

[As an aside, AB and Michael are in good company. Freud made the same mistake. In his very early writing, Freud talked about defensive actions (where *defensive* is an adjective). Freud was hugely perceptive when he described what people did. For example, he was very perceptive when he noticed that people who themselves lie frequently often accuse other people of lying (“You can’t trust anything people say—they’re always lying.”). Those descriptions were in his early writings.

However, in his later writings, those described acts became things—his perceptively described observation that liars often see others as lying became a thing—projection. And he nounified other perceptive observations into repression, denial, etc. That is, his observations of *defensive* (adjectival) acts became *defenses* (that is, he nounified adjectives). Then he bundled his collection of those defense/things, which became another thing/noun structure, the *ego*. That structure became the foundation on which the whole edifice of psychoanalysis was (mistakenly in my view) built; for example, he had to theorize about how that structure worked (libido, cathexis, etc.).]

In my view, nounification is at the heart of many missteps in psychology and philosophy.

Agnes comments: I had, in fact, intended my comment to mean “agentially,” and I was asking about Panel 2 here. “Agentially” simply isn’t a word that readily comes to my mind; it certainly didn’t in the moment, and I’m not sure it would have occurred to me even on reflection (although I agree that it better describes what I intended here). The framing of my question was my best attempt to describe this scenario in real time. I am taking several things away from this:

- Despite what Russ says, it seems that words really *do* matter. It seems that one has to be very precise as a DES interviewer; otherwise, one risks asking questions in a way that encourages misunderstanding. There is very little room for error. I’d imagine that such precision is a skill that one might acquire with experience.
- Suppose we are in this scenario again. Agnes wants to ask Michael a question. There is something about Michael’s experience that she would like to hear more about. Yet she finds herself struggling to formulate the question. Should she do her best in the moment, knowing that she may get it wrong? Or should she not say anything?
- I’m interested in the answer to this question because my own (untheorized) view of communication between individuals more generally is that it is an imperfect process. Speakers ought to do their best to articulate what they intend to express as well as they can. They may get it wrong – the words that come out of their mouths may not capture exactly what they intended them to. But the very attempt to articulate this can help them clarify what they mean. So it can be valuable in

clarifying speakers' understanding of whatever they intend to express. Listeners, knowing that speakers are fallible, ought to interpret speakers charitably. The process is an iterative one, through which the individuals come to understand one another better.

- In this case, I also find it interesting that Michael claims to have understood what Agnes meant here, despite her imprecise framing of the question, in the way that Agnes intended that question. Yet Russ disagrees: Michael's invocation of "ego" indicates that he is in fact discussing a meta-experience, not the "agentic" closing of the browser window. This raises a question for me: What has greater authority, Michael's stated interpretation of what he thought Agnes meant, or the words he in fact used to answer her question?
- Russ's interpretation seems to indicate that Michael's words have more authority. We are back to words really mattering. But if we assume that Michael, too, is fallible here, using words in the best way he can to express something that is difficult to express, shouldn't we also not take his words that seriously? Just as Agnes used "agent" when in fact she meant "agentially," couldn't we understand Michael's use of "ego" as conveying something similar, albeit imperfectly? Given that he was trying to come up with the appropriate words to convey his experience in the moment, and that this can be difficult to do, shouldn't we (at least sometimes) interpret his words loosely?

Russ comments:

RE Agnes's "(untheorized) view of communication"

I agree with the first half (up to and including "the words that come out of their mouths may not capture exactly what they intended it to") of what Agnes says in this bullet. But...

RE "But the very attempt to articulate this can help them clarify what they mean."

One of the people who were very influential in my thinking was Frederick ("Fritz") Perls, the creator of Gestalt Therapy. Perls thought that most questions are manipulations of some kind, and that question marks are usually "hooks" designed to pull the other person into agreeing or otherwise supporting the questioner. That is, questions often are (wittingly or unwittingly) devices used to make the questioner look innocent, look like they are really interested in the other, when in fact the question is a device that presupposes its answer.

So yes, it is possible that (a) the very attempt to articulate a question can help clarify what they mean, but it is also possible that (b) the very attempt to articulate a question can refine the pressure applied by the hook. In my (and Perls's, I think) view, most people who ask (b) questions believe themselves to be asking (a) questions.

I am no mind reader—I do not presume to know the extent to which Agnes's questions are (a) type or (b) type. But the bullet that we are considering suggests a purity of the aim-toward-Truth that may not be warranted.

RE "Suppose we are in this scenario again. Agnes wants to ask Michael a question. There is something about Michael's experience that she would like to hear more about. Yet she finds herself struggling to formulate the question. Should she do her

best in the moment, knowing that she may get it wrong? Or should she not say anything?"

Here's my attempt at how Agnes might ask the question:

Michael, I would like to know *X*. I don't know precisely what *X* is; I know that my statement of *X* is less than perfectly aligned with what I currently understand to be *X*, and I hope that perhaps in the stating of it I will both refine what *X* is (refine what I want to know) and perhaps learn something about how to talk about it. I know that my wanting to know is doubtless to some degree manipulative, and I both apologize for that and hope that in my stating of it I will help reveal the degree and kind of manipulation, in the hope that I can learn to become less manipulative. I further recognize and accept that you, Michael, will hear *X* as some combination of the way I currently understand it, and the way I (wittingly or unwittingly) manipulate you as I say it, and the way you currently understand what you think I am asking, and the way you want to manipulate me in the answer, and doubtless a bunch of other ingredients that I don't know how to list. In short, it is not possible for me to ask a good question, and it is not possible for you to give a good answer. But with all that said, please tell me about *X*, and I will not try to do the impossible (that is, I will not try to understand your answer), but I do think that if we keep at this, we might be able to help each other abrade away the impurities and eventually come to grasp something of value, that may or may not be in the vicinity of *X*.

That is at best a very cumbersome question, which could be abbreviated by saying "I would like (in a manner of speaking) to know (in a manner of speaking) *X* (in a manner of speaking); and I will understand (in a manner of speaking) your reply as being related to (in a manner of speaking) *X* (in a manner of speaking).

I think it is not possible to articulate that question at every step of the way, but I think it is possible to convey and refine that question, in all its manners of speaking, across the iterative process, and in that process, it may well turn out that *X* is the wrong question.

RE "What has greater authority, Michael's stated interpretation of what he thought Agnes meant, or the words he in fact used to answer her question?"

...or the way he used those words, or the prosody, or the qualifiers, or the words he didn't use? If, to your antennae, as best they can be adjusted, there is a question of that ilk, then there probably cannot be an answer to that question (yet). We still need to refine the question, purify our motives, and so on, until somewhere down the road we can ask and answer the question in a way that our antennae are happy across all those aspects.

That is, to the extent that your question is genuinely about Michael's experience, and to the extent that Michael genuinely understands your question as you intend it, and to the extent that he has apprehended the experience about which you inquire (and that you have limited yourself to inquiry about his experience), and to the extent that Michael trusts that your question comes from a place of genuine caring about his experience, then he will answer the question in a way that, at least for the most part, his stated interpretation (if there is one), the

words he uses, the way he uses them, their prosody, the words he doesn't use, and so on, will all be in alignment. In that situation, it will not occur to us to inquire about what has the greater authority. And in that situation, if something is out of whack (because neither Michael nor we are perfect in our delivery), then the out-of-whack-ness will likely stand out to us (like a wrong note in a symphony), and if we mention it, Michael will happily correct/align the out-of-whack detail. And, parallelly, if there is something out of whack about our question, that out-of-whack-ness will stand out to Michael, and if he mentions it, we will happily correct/align the out-of-whack detail. Such perfection is at the very least difficult, if not impossible, for us mortals to attain, but I think pretty-darn-good is attainable.

39:38 Michael: What you mean by that? Yes. I was intentionally, I, I, yeah. Yeah. That's probably a better way to say it than what I said a second ago. I said it was conceptual rather than perceptual. But more precisely, yes, I was aware of myself being the, the agent who is doing this. I wasn't *thinking* those thoughts—"I am now the agent who was doing this." [AB: Mm-hmm.] But yes, it was very much a, my, my own ego and some generic sense of ego was very present to me at, at that moment as I was doing this. It was *me* that was doing it.

39:38 Russ comments: Michael and AB have now agreed that there is a meta-experience. I doubt that that is true. So RTH will have to sort that out (see 40:19ff).

Michael comments: [This comment was written simultaneous to Agnes's comment at 39:22 and my 39:22 response to Agnes. That is, Michael did *not* have access to Agnes's comment at 39:22 and my 39:22 response to Agnes.] I don't really know what 'meta-experience' is. I guess it is experience of one's having an experience? I don't know what that means. That's not what I understood Agnes to say, and not what I was agreeing to. I was just saying that this experience (of shutting down the browser on the phone) included a definite sense of agency. It wasn't a passive experience at all. As I understood things (perhaps not making sufficiently fine distinctions), when I agreed with Agnes about the nature of this experience and when (shortly after) I agreed with Russ, I took myself to be agreeing to more or less the same thing both times.

[later] After rereading Russ' comments, maybe the concept of a 'meta-experience' is a little clearer? I was understanding it based solely on the construction of the word ('meta' + 'experience') and was thinking "what is an experience of an experience?" (I have no idea), but Russ' [original] comment (39:22) is more specific than that: "Were you aware of Michael as Michael was closing the window?". The answer to that question is 'no' (but also that's not what I understood Agnes to be asking). So I wasn't 'thinking of myself as an agent and noticing that this agent, me, is agentially doing something', but I was definitely acting agentially, as the cause of the closing of the window, and I experienced the closing in that manner, as something that is being done by me. It was not a passive experience (like 'oh there is the window being closed'). It was an experience 'of acting'.

I think maybe I should also add, in this connection, that when I say that I am 'aware' of something, I mean only that the something in question is a part of my conscious experience. I don't mean that I'm reflecting on it in some 'meta' way. (So

"I am aware of the cat's meow" means "I am consciously hearing the cat's meow", but not "I'm [thinking about/reflecting on/representing to myself as an object of my own awareness] the cat's meow." Maybe 'aware' isn't the right word here. And maybe I failed to make the relevant distinction (but I was trying to) at 39:38 when I said, on the one hand, that "I was aware of myself being the agent" while on the other "I wasn't thinking those thoughts..."

For what it's worth, the former is intended to mean something very similar to what I mean when I say that speech is 'productive' rather than passive (or 'merely heard'), meaning that the experience of the speech includes an aspect of "being produced by me, not passively received from another."

I don't know whether that helps or just muddies the waters, but it's an attempt...

Russ comments: RE "Were you aware of Michael as Michael was closing the window?". The answer to that question is 'no' (but also that's not what I understood Agnes to be asking)"

However, when Michael actually answered AB, he said "my own ego ... was very present to me," which is to speak as if the answer to that question is 'yes'. See my discussion of Michael's ego answer beginning in the paragraph that begins "AB's nounifying is a big deal here..." in my comment at 39:22.

RE "So I wasn't 'thinking of myself as an agent and noticing that this agent, me, is agentially doing something', but I was definitely acting agentially, as the cause of the closing of the window"

Notice that when Michael reconsiders [later after rereading] this issue, he transforms his earlier use of the noun "agent" into the adverb "agentially." That is, Michael corrects his earlier discussion by *denounifying* it, which I take to be his grammar producer agreeing with what I said about nounification in my 39:22 comment.

RE "when I say that I am 'aware' of something, I mean only that the something in question is a part of my conscious experience. I don't mean that I'm reflecting on it in some 'meta' way.

That is the way I understood Michael.

Michael comments [a month later]: RE "However, when Michael actually answered AB, he said 'my own ego ... was very present to me', which is to speak as if the answer to that question is 'yes'. See my discussion of Michael's ego answer beginning in the paragraph that begins 'AB's nounifying is a big deal here...' in my comment at 39:22."

I think this issue has been one of the central causes of confusion in our interviews, though it has been at least partially cleared up by the comments and other discussion. Here is my understanding of the situation, as I reflect on it. (I'm not saying anything about any specific experience here -- they are much too far in the past, now, for that sort of thing to be meaningful.)

Although it is true that in certain therapeutic contexts (but really never anywhere else) I have been asked to 'consider myself as an agent', in the sense of engaging in some sort of 'meta' thinking about the fact that I am thinking (or acting,

or whatever), as in Michael having the thought "OK here's Michael, presently stirring the oatmeal", this kind of thinking is utterly foreign to me. I think I'm safe in saying that it does not occur naturally (for me), and it does not spontaneously occur to me to engage in it, and I'm probably terrible at it when I try. Maybe I don't really even understand what the words "thinking about oneself acting" really mean, or at any rate what that kind of thinking would be like. I think that when I'm asked to do it, or when circumstances somehow point in that direction (and while typing this note, I am dangerously close to it...), it is a real struggle. (I'm not talking about reflecting on former thinking. That's not particularly difficult, and I *do* think that one outcome of these interviews has been that I've become better, or at least more sophisticated (in a good way), at doing so. I'm talking about "thinking about X" or "doing Y" and, *at the same time*, having a thought along the lines of "here is Michael thinking X, or doing Y".) And by 'struggle' I mean there is some psychic pain involved in the attempt. It hurts. Probably also I'm just bad at it, perhaps bordering on completely unable to do it.

So in the course of our interviews, I think that there were moments of confusion because a question would be asked along the lines of "did you experience yourself doing X?" or "tell me about the agentiality of that experience" or some such, and I'd readily answer using more or less the same terms of the question, but never dreaming that what we are talking about (from somebody else's point of view) was something like "Michael experiencing his own agentiality as an object of experience" or some such thing. In other words, I'm not convinced that 'nounifying' was ever a big deal, not because it can't be a big deal but because it would not have occurred to me to distinguish between the noun-talk and the adverb-talk.

In other words (and again I'm now reflecting in a general way rather than reporting on or correcting a report of any specific experience), if a question was asked in 'noun-terms', I think (but I haven't systematically checked) I'd tend to answer in noun-terms, and similarly for 'adverb-terms', but I doubt that there was a significant difference between those two ways of talking, for me, even if it sounded that way (because somebody might have been hearing the former as "Michael talking about his experience of his own agentiality" or some such thing, but I am confident that it would not have been understood by me in that way).

To be clear, I'm *not* saying that there isn't some deep subtle psychological effect of speaking in noun-terms versus adverb-terms. Maybe there is. I don't know about deep subtle psychological effects (and when people start talking about such things my brain gets mushy and I stop listening, or I get defensive because it sounds like they are asserting their own authority over my inner mental life, telling me "what's really going on"). I'm just saying that until the idea is introduced (and maybe even afterwards) I wouldn't have intentionally meant (by phrases such as "my own ego was very present to me") that my agentically acting self was an object of my own experience or awareness. I *do* understand how those kinds of phrases could be heard that way. And maybe that's even the natural way to hear them. But if I were to say such words (and apparently I did), I think it very unlikely that I would be reporting an 'experience of myself as agentically acting or thinking', for the reasons noted above. I would have (I assert, now, with no actual recollection of saying such words!) meant something more like "it was an experience of acting, not (or not only) of receiving -- active not passive."

Russ comments [replying to Michael's month-later comment]: Before replying to Michael directly, I make this preliminary comment:

I suspect that everything that I have said or written anywhere in this DES-with-Michael-D project is some unspecifiable admixture of several motives: (a) I'd like to grasp Michael's experience as Michael experiences it; (b) I'd like Agnes and Michael to understand DES as I practice it; (c) I'd like to have what appears (or may appear) on my website be useful to anyone who sincerely might wish to undertake an exploration of another person's inner experience; (d1) I'd like to have what appears (or may appear) on my website display my current practice of DES so that anyone can be genuinely critical of, or genuinely skeptical about, or genuinely appreciative of my own particular, idiosyncratic (one might say Russ-ian) attempts at grasping the inner experience of another; (d2) I'd like to be transparent about what I do and what I think, not because I believe it to be True but to facilitate the interests of d1; (e) I'd like what appears or may appear on my website about Michael's experience to be useful or informative to anyone who has a genuine interest in topics that refer to "schizophrenia"; (f) I'd like what appears or may appear on my website to be useful or informative to anyone who has a genuine interest in topics that refer to "consciousness"; and (g) probably a bunch of other stuff. I think all those motives are probably present all the time; sometimes one or another is more salient.

RE "I think I'm safe in saying that it [meta-experience of being an agent] does not occur naturally (for me)"; and

RE "I think that when I'm asked to do it, or when circumstances somehow point in that direction... it is a real struggle"; and

RE "And by 'struggle' I mean there is some psychic pain involved in the attempt. It hurts."

I suspect that all those statements (and the other statements about Michael's meta-experience and/or agentiality) are 100% true. I have never doubted any of that throughout our interactions.

RE "I'm not convinced that 'nounifying' was ever a big deal, not because it can't be a big deal but because it would not have occurred to me to distinguish between the noun-talk and the adverb-talk."

I agree that "nounifying" was not a big deal *for Michael*; that is, not a big deal from the perspective of motive (a) above. I have found *Michael* to be a very competent describer of his experience and not terribly susceptible to being influenced by the implications of our questioning. However, that is *not* true for other DES participants, so my discussion of nounifying was doubtless motivated more by motives (b), (c), (d1), (d2), and (f) than by (a).

Furthermore, I do have a sensitivity to meta-experience talk because it does in general screw up DES questioning and because it is problematic from the perspective of motive (f). I do not consider myself to be a consciousness scientist, but my understanding is that some theories of consciousness (usually called *higher-order-theories* or *HOT* theories) hold that a mental state is conscious only if you are *aware of yourself as being in that state* (i.e., you have a meta-awareness / "thought about the thought"). I can say from what I take to be very careful observation (of the same ilk displayed here) that *sometimes* people (not Michael) have frankly meta-awareness experiences, but that those are relatively rare.

RE “I doubt that there was a significant difference between those two ways of talking [nounified or not], for me, even if it sounded that way (because somebody might have been hearing the former as ‘Michael talking about his experience of his own agentiality’ or some such thing, but I am confident that it would not have been understood by me in that way).”

I 100% agree with that *for Michael*. But that is not true for all or most DES participants. And there is a substantial philosophical literature on meta-experience, agentiality, and so on, *none* of it informed by what I would consider adequate explorations of inner experience.

RE “I think this issue has been one of the central causes of confusion in our interviews.”

I agree that there has been confusion, which I attribute primarily to the not-always-in-agreement nature of the various motives described above. In particular, I am sorry for any distress that Michael may have felt when I was pursuing motive (c) or (f) or whatever instead of purely focused on motive (a).

Michael comments: No need to apologize about distress. Indeed, while my early prediction that the process would be difficult at times was true, it was true far less severely than I had anticipated, and I credit that to you and Agnes.

Russ comments: I thought explicitly about the word *sorry* vs. the word *apologize*. I am sorry that there was distress, but I was *not* apologizing for it. I thought we were very straightforward about our interests (including the multiple motives that I described in my latest comment), and as far as I could tell the level of distress was within the bounds of what we agreed to, and agreed to each time, so I did not feel the need to apologize.

It does illustrate an aspect of the process that I think is important: There was no *consent form*, as if after signing such a thing all is good. Instead, there was a living consent process, one day at a time, wherein you (and I and Agnes) had the right to withdraw or discontinue or whatever, based on whatever reasons (including but not limited to distress) you found important. That is standard DES practice, based on the belief that people do not (necessarily) know what their inner experience is like, and therefore are not genuinely in a position to consent to anything.

40:16 AB: And I’m, I’m good with that.

40:19 RTH: So I’m not sure that I understood that. Does it, does “me that’s doing it” mean that I am aware of *Michael*? Or does this mean I am enthusiastically closing the window? That’s the

40:33 Michael: No, more the latter. I mean, it’s not, I’m not thinking about myself, but,

40:38 RTH: So this is an *emphatic closing*

40:40 Michael: Yeah, yeah.

40:42 RTH: Rather than a Michael as

40:44 Michael: <crosstalk>, but it wasn't a pass, it was not at all a passive experience. It was an action that I was performing. And I experienced it as an, as a performance of an action, not as, I wasn't *witnessing* this happen. I was *making it* happen.

40:44 Russ comments: I understand that this experience does *not* include a meta-experience—that is, it does *not* (at the moment of the beep) include some observation of or consideration of *Michael*. The experience is of emphatically active closing, one might say of an *agentic* closing, but the experience is *not* of Michael's agency in the closing.

It is a tricky but important distinction. Michael's experience is aimed *out there*, at the closing (one feature of which is that it is being performed by Michael). Michael's experience is *not* aimed *at Michael*, is *not* aimed at any feature of Michael including his agency in closing the window. That is, this experience is not a meta-experience.

40:59 RTH: Okay. With an exclamation point.

41:01 Michael: With an exclamation point.

41:07 RTH: And I think I'm good about that.

Sample 9.3 discussion starts here

41:11 Michael: Okay. Nu number 3. I was looking at a, uh, uh, a book title. Uh, it was on, it was, uh, it was on a computer screen. Um, I was at work at this point. I, uh, it was on a computer screen, but it was, I was looking at a, at a, at a picture of a book, um, and the title of the book had, I can't even read my own writing right now, but it doesn't matter. I can, I know the word that matters in the title is the word "stratification." Um, so I was seeing the word "stratification." My eyes had kind of paid extra attention to that word.

41:50 And also behind that word on the kind of the, there was, that, that word was on the cover in front of a, or on top of, or whatever, I'm not sure how you say it, um, a picture. And the picture was, um, students who were ostensibly graduating, they were wearing mortar boards. And I had paused on the word "stratification" and on the students who were right behind it. So they were both in my visual, I could see both at the same time. And they, it, it all looked, and I was kind of reflecting on this, not in a meta way, but it all looked very unreal. Like, I, I, the word "stratification" felt like it wasn't really a word. And the students wearing the mortar... Not, *unreal* isn't the right word. It looked, it all looked ridiculous. I think that's a better way of saying it. So the word "stratification" just looked like nonsense to me. Like that's not a word! And the students wearing the mortar boards, I was just kind of, I, I wasn't having any, any explicit worded thoughts, but they just looked bizarre. Like, what, what are these? Like, just the whole bizarreness of wearing a mortar board. Like, why would we do that [laughs]? It's ridiculous! That, that kind of reaction I was having. But not with any of those words. I'm now trying to put words into, to, to

describe my sense of ridiculousness of the scene that I was seeing and my sense of, of those letters and that word “stratification” just being sort of random letters that someone put together, that’s not really a word.

43:36 RTH: So the physical word that would be recognized as a, by somebody who was reading the, that word was “stratification”. [Michael: Correct.] And do you, at this particular moment, recognize this word as “stratification”? That this a semantically meaningful word to you? Or is, or is it just, I see the letters and the ridiculousness of the visual display is what....<crosstalk>

44:02 Michael: Yeah. So just prior to the beep, I had read it, and I read it with understanding. I knew what this book was about. Um, but in the moment of the beep, I had kind of, I had pa I’d gotten past that, and I was *just looking* at the word, and it just looked like *it wasn’t a word to me*. It, the, the meaning had gone, had had, had gone. It was just letters that didn’t look like they constituted a word.

44:30 RTH: So at, at the moment of the beep, I see randomly ridiculous letters.

44:38 Michael: Yes.

44:39 RTH: Which in reality are the words “stratification,” but that is not my, and I knew that a moment ago, but at the moment I see a, a, an array of ridiculous letters.

44:50 Michael: Right. I mean, I think I, I know this is, this is not the right way to say this, or not in the spirit of what we’re doing, but I, I feel like other people with respect to words have something like this experience, where you see a word that’s a word and, but then it feels like it’s not a word for a moment. Is that, am I just being crazy when I say people have this experience?

45:14 AB: Well, I was gonna, if, if I can interject, I mean, I was gonna ask a question, which I assumed was going to be a banned question.

45:19 Michael: I know. And I, I also shouldn’t have said that, but I, I also, I’m actually independently of what we’re talking about. I’m kind of curious, like, is this something that happens to people where they see word and they’re like, *wait a minute, that’s not a word*.

45:34 RTH: So the answer to that is yes, that does sometimes happen, [Michael: Okay.] and, and, and, but not very often. I would say it is *remarkable to me* when, when, when some, when somebody, when somebody encounters a word that is stripped of its semantic, meaning, that’s interesting to me, that that is not... Words generally come with their semantic meaning pretty tightly tied to it.

45:34 Russ comments: RE “that’s interesting to me”

That expression under-specifies what RTH means. It is “interesting” *because it is rare*. It does happen, but it does *not* happen *often*, and *as a result of that rarity* it becomes interesting to me—which means, it is a signal that I should be paying attention here, should be careful that I am hearing faithfully what the person is trying to say.

- 46:04 Michael: Right. Well, and that's true for me, too. I mean, most times when I see a word, I, I don't even think of it as being a word. I just, the meaning just kind of comes to mind without even any effort.
- 46:13 RTH: Right. That's, that's the way it usually is.
- 46:14 Michael: But in this, in this *particular* case, that's *not* what was going on. Even though a second ago it hit, that, that's *exactly* what happened when I read the title. But then for whatever reason (and I have no idea), my eyes went back after I read the whole title, my eyes went back to "stratification." And it was, and, and it suddenly appeared not word like all of a sudden.
- 46:35 RTH: So what I, what I understand is that it's not, it, it is more, or *less* than just not word-like. It's that *I see letters*.
- 46:44 Michael: Uh, yes! No, I, I definitely, I, I definitely was seeing letters, but they weren't constituting a word.
- 46:50 RTH: Right. And that's pretty unusual, I would say. The, the, to zoom in on the letters, or to, to see the array of letters without their word-, word-semantic-nesses, that's pretty unusual.
- 47:04 Michael: Right. Well, that's, that's what was going on. And, and then also the, the whole mortar board thing was, I'm still, I still, now I think about it again. I'm again thinking how, what, what, how, how did this become a thing?
- 47:17 RTH: So, so does this seem like two seeings at the same time? I'm, I'm seeing these letters and I'm seeing the mortar board? Or does it seem like one thing: I'm seeing letters and mortar boards?
- 47:26 Michael: No, it's two, it's two different things. They're, they're both in my visual field. So I guess in some sense I'm, it's all one experience. But no, there was, it was, they were, they were pretty well separated conceptually in my experience.
- 47:39 RTH: So I see ridiculous letters *and* I see ridiculous mortar boards. [Michael: Yes.] And those two things share the ridiculousness aspect, whatever that is, which we haven't yet quite figured out, [Michael: Right.] but they're not, it's *not* like I'm seeing letters *out there among* the mortar boards. [Michael: No.] I am, I am seeing two... There's two separate organized seeings [Michael: Yes.] that share, uh, something in common, which is the ridiculousness.
- 48:08 Michael: Yes, that is, that is correct. Yeah.
- 48:11 RTH: Okay. And, and I'm not sure I got the gist of the ridiculous. [coughs]
- 48:17 Michael: So in the case of, in the case of the, in the case of the word, it was, it was, *ridiculous* may not be quite the right term. It was just what we've already said. It was just, it

wasn't, it was *not a word*. It just looked like someone had randomly thrown letters onto the front of this thing. That's not *ridiculous*, exactly. But it, it's not, it doesn't make any sense. It's just *letters*.

48:40 RTH: Nonsensical.

48:41 Michael: Nonsensical. And nonsensical might actually be a, not a crazy way to describe the experience of the mortar boards, either!

48:49 RTH: Okay.

48:50 Michael: Um, but there, I think ridiculous would be a more appropriate, it, it struck me as ridiculous that people would put these things on their heads. It, it, it, it, it. So I reacted to seeing that in the same way that you might react if they had all had bananas on their heads, or something.

49:07 RTH: And so it was particularly about the *mortar boards*.

49:10 Michael: Yes.

49:15 RTH: And I *see* that as ridiculous. This is *not* like I have a separate thought. *Oh, look how ridiculous*

49:20 Michael: Those motors. No, it's just, I'm just, it, it's a, just

49:23 RTH: I see ridiculous headwear.

49:24 Michael: Yes. There was no, I don't think there was any, certainly, I couldn't even in the moment after the beep recall any, any thought, [RTH: Okay.] any ex, explicit thinking. It was just an experience of this is very strange what's going on here.

49:43 RTH: And is it, is it the *headwear* that's strange?

49:45 Michael: Yes.

49:48 RTH: So it's not like there, there are other features, no doubt of these people. What they're, I

49:52 Michael: Don't even know what the other features were.

49:54 RTH: It was male or female, or black or white, or whatever.

49:55 Michael: No idea of any of that. I was focused on, so

49:57 RTH: This is about the *headwear*. [Michael: Yep.] Ridiculous headwear and nonsensical letters [Michael: Yep.] seen as two separate, simultaneous, visually in the same place, but separate experiences.

- 50:11 Michael: Yeah. They weren't really, I mean, they were, they were visually in the same place, but there was no real connection in my mind between these two things. [RTH: Okay.] um, except the fact that they were both being seen at the same time.
- 50:24 RTH: Okay. And, and is there a connection between this nonsensic/ridiculousness and, and the rest of the book, the title of the book? Or is, or is that not, an irrelevant question to ask?
- 50:41 Michael: No, I wasn't even looking at the rest of the title. I mean, I had just read it, um, but I was, I hadn't read it with any great interest. So it's not, I have, I didn't pay that much attention to what the title was, but I had just read it, and I understand or understood. I don't remember what the title is now, but I, I, I'm sure I understood in the moment. I, I didn't pause because I wasn't getting what the title was saying or something like that.
- 51:04 RTH: So for *whatever reason*, and that reason is not present to me at the moment of the beep. But there's no doubt, some psychological theory that somebody could advance to say, why, why I was thinking about this. *But as far as my experience is concerned*, I am *seeing* two simultaneous, in some ways similar, but in most ways, different scenes, one nonsensical letters and the other ridiculous headwear. And what makes them the same is that the similarity between nonsensical and ridiculous. But other than that, they seem like two separate simultaneous experiences.
- 51:39 Michael: Yep. That's right.
- 51:44 RTH: Then I'm good about that.
- 51:47 AB: I have a question about the, the nonsensicality of the, of the word. Um, so one way of understanding it is... Sorry, the nonsensicality of the array of letters [Michael: Mm-hmm.] Um, one way of understanding that would be to say that you see the array of letters still as a word, but the word is nonsense. Right? So you, maybe you even still read "stratification," but that has lost meaning. And, and maybe to bring this back to the example that you gave before, um, if you take an ordinary word and you just say it over and over and over and over and over again, it appears, or at least to me, to be nonsensical, to have kind of lost its meaning. [Michael: Mm.] Or is it nonsensical? As in it's just, you're not even seeing a word at all. You're just seeing an array of letters. And so that the letters happened to be the letters of "stratification", but they could easily have been like QTSZ, like just any random string of letters that in the English language would have no plausible wordy-ness.
- 51:47 Russ comments: RE "the nonsensicality of the ... word. ... Sorry, the nonsensicality of the array of letters"
 Good! This is AB's epoché in action. The natural attitude is the word; the experiential unity is the array of letters. AB here appears to be fighting the natural attitude, and it is not easy. (The good news is that it does get easier with practice.)

RE “one way of understanding that would be to say that you see the array of letters still as a word....but they could easily have been like QTSZ”

Good! This also appears to be AB’s epoché in action. The epoché is not mind reading or interpretation; it is bracketing any preference. Here, AB presents a pretty even-handed option of the natural attitude (word) vs. an unusual experiential unit (letters), giving Michael the fair chance to differentiate that.

RE “ if you take an ordinary word and you just say it over and over and over and over and over again, it appears, or at least to me, to be nonsensical, to have kind of lost its meaning”

Not good. This is not the experience Michael is describing, so it is likely to muddy the waters.

Agnes comments: I knew in the moment that this was going to be called out as not good! The reason I asked it anyway was because I was genuinely trying to come to grips with what “nonsensical” means for Michael in this context. To me, in the moment, this seemed like a plausible interpretation of “nonsensical,” not in the sense that Michael had in fact repeated the word such that it had lost its meaning, but in the sense that this is the kind of context in which a word that normally has meaning might no longer have meaning. Note that I’m not defending this interpretation as definitely plausible; I’m just saying that it seemed that way to me in the moment.

More generally, it seems like, by necessity, we have to draw upon *some* assumption or other in order to ask questions in the first place. Another way to put the point: When I ask a question, it’s because I don’t already know the answer. I’m trying to say: here is one way I might interpret what you said; is it correct? In order to say that, I have to have a candidate interpretation already.

Later, in the discussion of Eduroam popping out, RTH asks whether there is any depth to Eduroam and whether Michael saw it move out of the screen. But Michael didn’t mention any depth or movement. So why do those questions count as good ones? If the answer is that we have to look at Michael’s answer to see if he clearly describes his experience in response, that’s tricky, because his answer isn’t available to us before we ask the question.

Russ comments: RE “To me, in the moment, this seemed like a plausible interpretation of...”

I suggest you examine how that “seeming like a plausible” presents itself to you, because that is precisely what the natural attitude feels like. To the extent that you want to learn how to enact the epoché, you should bottle that sensation, and uncork it and examine it over and over, until you recognize that sensation when you get the first whiff of it.

Presuppositions feel plausible, feel reasonable, feel desirable, feel virtuous. Enacting the epoché is basically cultivating the skill of noticing the feeling of plausibility when it first arises and having your *first* reaction being *Uh oh! There’s likely a presupposition in the vicinity!* Of course, some things that feel plausible are actually correct, so the feeling of plausibility does not *always* signal a presupposition. But until your first reaction to plausibility is the likelihood that you are mistaken, then whatever presupposition is in the vicinity will have won.

And the same for reasonable, for desirable, and *especially* for virtuous. The feeling of virtuous is almost always, in my experience, the outer skin of a presupposition.

RE “it seems like, by necessity, we have to draw upon *some* assumption or other in order to ask questions in the first place.”

Bracketing a presupposition does *not* mean having no assumptions. It means putting out of play the power of the assumptions. It means genuinely preferring to be wrong, which is the same thing as be indifferent to whether you are wrong or right.

51:47

Exercise for the reader

Below are two questions. Are they the same or different? In what way? My answer is at the end of this transcript; no fair peeking.

1. Here is one way I might interpret what you said; is it correct?
2. Here is one way I might interpret what you said; can you give me a better way?

RE “If the answer is that we have to look at Michael’s answer to see if he clearly describes his experience in response, that’s tricky, because his answer isn’t available to us before we ask the question.”

It seems tricky, but it is not. Asking questions is a skill that is iteratively acquired. I could defend my eduroam questions, perhaps by quoting Michael when he used terminology that suggested depth or motion, both in this interview and in all previous ones. But that would make it an interpretation of Michael’s words, which is undesirable (which is what I mean when I say “It’s not about the words”).

I can state some general principles of good questions (such as don’t nounify things, cultivate ignorance, be wary of the feeling of plausibility and virtue), but none of those, and not even the collection of those, is enough. Mostly, I think you need to cultivate the skill of hearing Michael (and anyone else) with fidelity, and figuring out what you, with your characteristics as they are, can do to modify your characteristics so that tomorrow you can hear Michael a little bit better than you did today. That means asking the questions that you know how to ask and seeing what happens as judged by your better angels, so that tomorrow you can know how to ask questions that (a) your better angels think give better results and (b) help your better angels to become even better angels.

It’s iterative all the way down.

52:58 Michael: Yeah. I, I mean, I, I think it’s the latter, more than the former. [AB: Okay.] Um, I certainly hadn’t been reading it over and over again, but I get that’s that you weren’t suggesting that. I’m just saying that, that. [AB: Yeah.] Um, and, um, and I am kind of familiar with what you just described. I mean, I think the same thing happens to me if I repeat something too many times, it starts to feel like nonsense. Maybe it was nonsense to begin with, but, um, this was more like, it’s a random collection of letters. Now, there, there must have been some residual sense of it should be a word, otherwise, why would a random collection of letters be striking in any way? But I wasn’t thinking that. Um, it just felt random. [AB: (inaudible)] It felt

like someone could have just spilled some letters onto this, onto the front of this book. And I was looking at the letters that they had spilled onto the front.

52:58 Russ comments: Regarding the general principle that the way you know whether you've asked a good question is whether Michael is describing experience: To my ear, this turn starts out talking about experience. Then the middle half (starting with "Um, and, um, and I am kind of familiar with" and ending with "why would a random collection of letters be striking in any way?") is *not*, to my ear, a description of his experience at the moment of the beep. That is, this is the penalty being paid for the not-good portion of AB's 51:47 question. Michael then returns to describing experience, so the penalty here is not lethal; it just wastes 30 seconds of valuable interview time.

53:49 AB: So it was nonsensical in the sense that the letters didn't even have the quality of being a word.

53:54 Michael: That's correct.

53:54 Russ comments: AB's summary is 100% on the target, and the prize (that is, the opposite of the penalty) is that Michael says "that's correct" with (to my ear) the quiet conviction that arises from and conveys *that's exactly right*.

53:55 AB: Okay.

53:59 RTH: And that I would, I would say is what makes this different from the re, repeating a word and word and word and word and word. The whole word disappears. And when that happens, it doesn't break in, it doesn't disintegrate into *its letters*, usually. [AB: Right.]

54:11 Michael: I see. Okay.

54:12 RTH: This is, this is the,

54:17 Michael: Okay. I'm not sure that that statement is true of me, but I get what you're saying. I mean, I, we're not talking about a real experience at this point, so I don't know. But, um, right.

54:17 Russ comments: RE "we're not talking about a real experience at this point" Michael is right, and his observation means that we are still in the penalty box that is the result of the not-good portion of AB's 51:47 turn.

54:31 RTH: So I think we got, I think we've got it. I'm happy with this anyway.

54:35 AB: Me too.

54:36 RTH: Number 4. [Michael: Okay.] And, [to AB] and I'll, this is your beep, and I'll try to honor that. [they laugh] It's hard, hard for me!

Sample 9.4 discussion starts here.

54:44 Michael: I, I was sitting in the aforementioned Chris's office, uh, in his chair. I was helping him with his laptop. Um, and uh, so that's the context. I had his laptop in my lap. Um, and there were, um, two things going on. I was saying to him, uh, "I could never connect to eduroam." So I was saying those words. Um, the, the beep happened after those words, but *very soon* after those words. Um, and they were out loud, he heard me. And, um, that, that's probably, I mean, yeah, they were out loud. He heard me. Um, and I heard, I heard my own words as well.

55:38 Um, and then while I was, while I was saying that, and, and, and afterwards, I was looking at the word eduroam, EDU Roam, um, in a dropdown menu on his laptop. I was looking at that particular word. And a kind of a, a copy of that word had emerged from the screen and was like sitting like an inch or so in front of the word that was on the screen. I was seeing both of those. I was seeing the one on the screen and I was seeing the one about an inch in front of it. It wasn't moving, it just kind of popped out and was sitting there in front of the screen, and in front of the, the word eduroam that was also on the screen.

55:38 Russ comments: First, for those not in university environments, eduroam is a roaming access service for the international research and education community. Eduroam members at any university get automatic broadband login access whenever they visit any other university anywhere in the world.

Exercise for the reader:

Go back and see/hear Michael's discussion of the eduroam on the dropdown menu and of eduroam that is an inch in front. What can you say about the manner in which Michael talks about those two eduroams? My answer is at the end of this transcript—no fair peeking until you commit yourself to your own observation.

56:34 AB: Was the word in front of the eduroam identical to eduroam on the screen?

56:41 Michael: Yes. It was a, it was a perfect copy.

56:43 AB: It's a perfect copy? [Michael: Yeah.] And you're seeing it as, um, one inch in front. So am I understanding correctly that the eduroam in front of the screen is like outside of the screen, [Michael: Yes.] rather than...?

56:57 Michael: Yeah, it came out. I mean, an inch, who knows, but not a lot. But I'm, I'm using *inch* to mean a *little bit*, *not a lot*. But, um, it was, it had, it had come, sorry, I'm doing something with my hands. I just realized you can't see. So it had, it had like, if the word eduroam was right here on the screen then, and my finger is the word eduroam, then it kind of like that it had popped out. So I could see the one on the screen and I could see also the one it, the copy of it that was in front of the screen.

57:30 AB: Did, um, was this like a, a static experience? Or was there any kind of

57:35 Michael: Yeah, it was static until the beeper went off! And then I looked away to shut the beeper off.

57:45 AB: So the reason that, what I mean by that is I was wondering whether you are seeing the screen eduroam, eduroam on the screen, static eduroam?

57:57 Michael: Yeah. It wasn't moving.

57:59 AB: So that, that was one question. But then another question that I had was whether there's any experience of like perspective.

57:59 Russ comments: The concept of *perspective* is imported from the natural world, which is risky...

Agnes comment: Again, as with my comment at 51:47, if I'm not allowed to use anything from the natural world, then it's not clear to me where to even begin.

58:12 Michael: Yes.

58:13 AB: So in other words, and I don't know if this was the case or not, whether if you like moved your head up, you would kind of see over one of the eduroams to the other one.

58:13 Russ comments: ...but "and I don't know if this was the case or not" mitigates the risk to some degree.

58:22 Michael: Well, I could see both of them. [AB: Mm-hmm.] And they weren't on top of each other. The one had, so the laptop was kind of lower [AB: Mm-hmm.] Then it was in my lap. And so when the, when the, when the copy popped out because of my angle [AB: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.] to the screen, I could see both. It was as if it had popped straight out, like perpendicular to the screen. But since my eyesight, [AB: Mm-hmm.] my eyes were looking down on the screen at, at a, a pretty sharp angle, cuz it was down in my lap. I could see both of them.

58:56 AB: Mm-hmm] And that's how you can see that one was like in front of you.

58:56 Russ comments: RE: "And that's how..."

That is a natural-attitude assertion. In the experiential world, there is no reason that you need some perspective or angle or whatever to be able to see two things that in the natural world would be understood as overlapping.

59:00 Michael: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

59:01 AB: Mm-hmm. So, um, I'm good with that part of it.

59:16 RTH: I have a couple questions about that. So do you see this "popping" as, as in motion—I see it coming out—or is it just there?

59:16 Russ comments: Many of Michael's locutions, as does *popping* here, had an implied motion.

Michael comments: I can see how that word might imply motion. I wasn't using it to imply motion, but just a description of their relative positions – one was on the screen and the other was 'popping out'. Maybe I should have said 'popped out'? But then I suppose one would say that this implies motion in the past? I don't know. I get why you asked the question inasmuch as 'popping' could be an activity (like corn popping) rather than a state of being (like eyes popping out of one's head).

Agnes comments: But at 57:57 he explicitly says it wasn't moving.

Russ comments: Two things: (a) This is an example of why I say "it is not about the words." Yes, he did say what you said he said at 57:57. But he said lots of other things that cut in the was-moving direction. It is *not* our place to *interpret* what Michael said or meant—we are not mind readers. It is our place to help Michael say things where we *do not have to interpret* what Michael means. [As an aside, I think, rightly or wrongly, that much of philosophy is competing interpretations of what someone said or meant. I think that is a larger-scale attempt of the same kind that Agnes enacts here, and in both cases it is not informative.]

(b) I think my question is fair because (as it seems to me) it is entirely even-handed about the whether popping implies or does not imply motion. That is, this seems to me to be a well-crafted question.

(c) However, as usual, the best evidence of the quality of a question is not whether it *seems to me to be* well-crafted, but whether Michael's response is about experience. Here, his 59:25 "I did not see it come out" is 100% a clarification about experience. And I take his 59:28 continuation as being both a clarification of experience and a ratification of the importance of the question. When a DES participant says *this is the way it was this time but that was surprising to me because it is usually otherwise*, that is (to my ear) powerful evidence that we should credit his account. He is *not* just speaking from his presuppositions; he is providing evidence *against* his presuppositions, at least in this case.

59:25 Michael: I did not see it come out.

59:27 RTH: Okay.

59:28 Michael: Um, which is unusual. This sort of thing happens, not, not super often, but sometimes, and usually it's more like it emerges.

59:40 RTH: Okay.

59:41 Michael: Now I was talking at the same time, so maybe it did emerge and I just missed that part.

59:48 RTH: And as far as your experience is concerned, are the two eduroams both real?

59:57 Michael: As far as my *experience* is concerned. Not as far as my *knowledge* is concerned. [RTH: Right.] Yes. There's no difference in their degree of out-there-in-the-world-ness as experienced.

1:00:09 RTH: So I, I in some way *know*, knowledge-wise, that the popped out eduroam is not real.

1:00:18 Michael: I do know that, yes.

1:00:20 RTH: But experientially, in the moment, I see it as real as the one on the screen.

1:00:27 Michael: And I wasn't thinking about its non-reality in the moment. But what I say, I knew it. I all, I mean is: if you had interrupted my train of thought and asked me in the moment, *are they both real or is one real? And if so, which one's real and which one's not real?* I would've been able to answer that question very easily.

1:00:45 RTH: Okay. That, that, that's what I understand. But I wanna, what I wanna be clear is that in, if, if nobody's asking that question, what I am seeing is two real eduroams.

1:00:57 Michael: Yes. I, I mean, if nobody including myself [RTH: Right.] asked that question, then, that's what I'm seeing. And I wasn't asking myself that question. I wasn't really paying that much. I mean, I wasn't paying that much attention, to be honest. I mean, I was more, even though that's what I was seeing in the moment, I'm, I'm faithfully reporting to you what was going on. My concern in the moment was not, I wasn't particularly concerned with eduroam in the moment. Um, that that concern was fleeting. I was more concerned to help Chris with his laptop. Um, so I wasn't pausing to think about my experience at all. If I had paused for half a second, I would've, it would've, I would've said, no, of course that's not real.

1:01:40 RTH: So that's, that is the distinction that I, that I want to be clear about it. And I think I am clear about it. [Michael: Okay.] That at the moment at, so I'm gonna restate it just to make sure: At the, at the moment of the beep, I am, I am, I am having visual experience that that is interrupted by, the beep interrupts visual experience. And the visual experience is of seeing two eduroams, which experientially at the moment of the beep are equally real.

1:02:09 Michael: Yes. Correct.

1:02:10 RTH: Even though one of them is real and one of 'em is imaginary.

1:02:14 Michael: And I had just finished saying, I don't know, I mean, this was really just finished. So it really is kind of right before the beep, I had just finished saying, "I can never connect to eduroam."

1:02:23 RTH: Right. And, and does the, does the popped-out eduroam have any, any depth to it at all? You're seeing past it at an angle, you said.

1:02:36 Michael: You, oh, you mean... No, it doesn't have any depth. It's two dimensional.

1:02:42 RTH: Okay.

1:02:43 Michael: Or it's very thin or whatever. Uh, I mean, it's not really two dimensional, I guess it couldn't be, but it's very thin.

1:02:43 Russ comments: RE "I guess it couldn't be"

In the natural attitude, it couldn't be. But the experiential is an entirely different world, and there is no reason that two-dimensionality can't exist in the experiential world.

Michael comments: OK, so maybe some clarification is needed here. I said 'it's very thin' for two reasons: (1) I was not noticing any depth to it (for example I did not see the 'topside' of the letters (and this fact is what led me to say that it was 'two dimensional'); but (2) I think it would be wrong of me to say that I experienced the word 'eduroam' "as two-dimensional". I don't think it would be very illuminating, and maybe just plain inaccurate, to say that the experience of that word had any appreciable aspect of 'dimensionality' (and I was only barely noticing it in the first place – this was *not* a 'striking' experience but a 'ho-hum' experience).

3/9 Russ comments: This is a good example of the limitations (the in-a-manner-of-speaking) of language. (This is an instance of the it's-not-about-the-words discussion.)

Michael said (at 1:02:36) that 'eduroam' is two dimensional. He also said (in this comment) that it is wrong to say that 'eduroam' is two dimensional. I think he is right on both occasions: it is both correct and incorrect to say that 'eduroam' is two-dimensional.

In the first mention, Michael was answering my 1:02:23 question about depth. In that manner of speaking, 'eduroam,' has no depth—'eduroam' can fairly be described as being not three-dimensional and therefore two-dimensional.

In the second mention, Michael was focused on his experience at the moment of the beep. In that moment, there was no experience of dimensionality one way or the other—he was *not* seeing a *dimensional* 'eduroam'; he was seeing 'eduroam', so in that manner of speaking, it is *not* correct to say that 'eduroam' was two-dimensional.

I think there is no virtue in trying to delineate the precise meaning of "two-dimensional" or any other word. On the contrary, it is better to accept that words are pointers that invite the hearer to *look this-a-way*. Sometimes a pointer points north, sometimes the same pointer points south. That is not a fault of the pointer.

1:02:49 RTH: Okay. And the same font. Same...

1:02:52 Michael: Yeah. It's a perfect copy.

1:02:54 RTH: And, and the real, the on the screen eduroam has the rest of the screen around the letters ed.

1:03:03 Michael: Right.

1:03:04 RTH: Does, is that true of the popped out eduroam as well?

1:03:07 Michael: No, it's just the letters.

1:03:11 RTH: So the letters of eduroam have popped out.

1:03:15 Michael: Right. The, so the screen, maybe this helps, I don't know. The screen was, was mostly dark, mostly black or something close to black. The words on the screen were white and the one that popped out was also white.

1:03:32 RTH: But the ones that popped out are the letters EDU..., without the screen surrounding them.

1:03:39 Michael: Correct.

1:03:42 RTH: Okay.

1:03:43 AB: So you could kind of see through the letters as well. Like there is no bit of background. Like you could see, like R, you could see through like that [points through an imaginary letter]

1:03:43 Russ comments: That is a natural-attitude question. In the real world, you can see through individual letters. In the experiential world, that is not at all necessarily the case.

1:03:52 Michael: I mean, I didn't, I wasn't really looking closely enough to, to like look through the *O* in *roam*, but yes, it was, there was nothing. So in the *O* of *roam*, for example, there wasn't some, it wasn't black in the middle.

1:04:06 AB: Okay. Yeah, that was my question. Yeah.

1:04:11 RTH: But that doesn't mean he can, he can see through it. That that would be a, that would be...

1:04:15 Michael: I wasn't looking through it.

1:04:17 RTH: ...a real world question. [Michael: Right.] In, in the real world, if a letter doesn't have anything in the middle of it, you can see through it. But that is not necessarily the case in an imaginary world. In the imaginary world, there's nothing in the middle. But that doesn't mean you can see through it.

1:04:28 Michael: That's a fair statement. And I wasn't trying to see through it cuz I didn't need to. And this was also quite a fleeting experience. I wasn't, I wasn't really paying careful attention to it. Um, cuz I say that wasn't my concern at the moment. Um, but I'm confident in saying that there was no blackness involved. It was just the white part, just the white letters themselves that had popped out.

1:04:55 RTH: So you've had some, you've had at least one other example that I can remember, which was the facade of the house across the street on the first sample.

1:05:03 Michael: So that's, that was very similar, except I was paying much more attention to *that* than I was paying to this.

1:05:08 RTH: Okay.

1:05:09 Michael: Um, that, that was, I was, that I was really watching that transpire. And it was also, there was motion involved in that case. There was not motion involved in this case. So it is too, you're right there, there there's a certain kind of similarity here, but I was, this was a fleeting experience. I wasn't paying much attention to, it wasn't my concern at the time. The other one was, I was watching it, I was paying attention to what was going on. Sorry, maybe I didn't address your question. I started answering your question before you even asked it.

1:05:42 RTH: So the, so I, I have encountered similar things with other sampling and, and, and I have come to call them *creative seeing*. And I'm wondering whether that term means, whether that seems...

1:05:42 Russ comments: This discussion is somewhat off the DES track, in the important sense that I don't really care what words we use, and in particular I don't want *my* words to stand in the way of or twist Michael's experience.

Apparently, RTH felt confident enough about their communication that Michael's experience as it is is apprehended securely enough that he can begin to consider how he might conceptualize Michael's experience in the context of other samplings that he has performed. That is, he is confident enough about the quality of their *idiographic* grasp of Michael's experience that he is beginning to consider the *comparative* aspects of that experience.

1:05:56 Michael: I mean, I have my own word for it, which is *magic mind*. But you didn't like that when I used it before, I think

1:06:03 RTH: I didn't like it because it didn't, it, it didn't refer to the seeing aspect, which it seems like it was a, this is a seeing thing.

1:06:09 Michael: Right. Right. Magic seeing. I, I get that. It, that's more, it's, yeah.

1:06:14 RTH: I, I, I hit on the word *creative seeing* when I written about it is because I didn't want it to be pejorative. I didn't, but I wanted it to be, I wanted it to convey that it wasn't real either. But I did... But it but the *unreality* of it isn't present in the moment.

1:06:32 Michael: Correct.

1:06:34 RTH: That's,

1:06:38 Michael: So this is what will maybe certify me as a crazy person in your mind. But when I say something is real or not, all I mean is other people would also see it if they looked, or hear it if they listened, or whatever. That's a survival technique for me, if you like. [laughs] But that's how I, that's... When I say something's real, I mean, as far as I can tell, everyone el, everyone else with functioning perceptual apparatus would also

have a similar experience to mine. Not experience in your sense for us, but just somehow the con, they would see this thing, they would acknowledge that it's there, that sort of thing.

1:06:38

Russ comments: RE "when I say something is real or not, all I mean is other people would also see it if they looked, or hear it if they listened, or whatever."

To grasp that statement in high fidelity is an important task of this sampling. The epoché, in an important sense, is an acknowledgement that what Michael means by "real" is not, or is not necessarily, or is not in certain contexts, the same thing as what Russ means by "real." The epoché requires that Russ brackets what (and how) he grasps as real to be able to grok what (and how) Michael grasps as real. My sense is that we are doing a pretty good (but not yet fully adequate) job of that.

Michael comments: I've been pondering whether to add this next remark and decided to, but either or both of you should please feel entirely free to judge that the comment does not contribute to the cause (and to act on that judgment accordingly).

I am quite confident (always fallibly, of course) that the connection that many people feel between perception and what they call 'reality' is both strong and almost never explicitly considered. It's just 'there'. The connection that I mean is expressed by the presumption (but not necessarily an explicitly considered presumption) that one's perceptual experience more or less 'maps on to reality'. Seeing the mountain (under normal circumstances) and seeing the mountain 'as real' are pretty much the same thing. (Only in strange circumstances do people say that they see it as 'unreal'.) [Russ agrees with everything in this paragraph.]

My reason for making this assertion is based largely on how people react when they discover a mismatch between their perceptual experience and 'reality' (whatever they might mean by that word). I think, for example, of the viral incident of the 'blue/gold' dress some decade or so ago. What I found remarkable about that incident was how confident people were that *their* way of seeing the dress corresponded to 'reality', and how disturbed some people were at realizing that others see it very differently. Another example along similar lines involves how people react to certain visual or auditory illusions. (Many people have told me that they find the rotating mask illusion to be quite disturbing, for example.) [Russ agrees with everything in this paragraph.]

In other words, it seems (to me fallibly) that the 'default view' (but it's a 'view' that is generally adopted without any recognition that it is a 'view' in the first place, or indeed that it is being adopted at all) is that in the absence of strong counter-indicating evidence, perceptual experience more or less correctly generates either (1) a (more or less accurate) representation of some 'facts of the world' that are independent of human beings, or (2) a representation that is (more or less, adjusting for differences in physical orientation and the like) similar to the representations generated by others around me (or would be, if others were present), or both. (Most of the time, it seems that both (1) and (2) are presumed, or that they are not distinguished in the first place.) [Russ agrees with everything in this paragraph.]

Maybe that was also the 'default' for me at some point. I don't know. I do know that I have hallucinated music for a very long time (voices came later), and that at some point in my childhood, I presumed that it was heard by others, and that in my mid to late teens, I finally figured out that others do not hear this music (and that they do not, in general, hear their *own*, different, hallucinated music either). That realization was very dramatic for me (as in, I ended up in police custody), and it took well over a decade--closer to two decades, actually--to come to terms with it. [Russ inserts a comment: I have frequently said, sometimes in writing (I think) and perhaps to Michael, that I consider it a sin (and among my gravest professional sins) that I have not used DES with individuals who are at risk for or newly diagnosed with schizophrenia. By sin, I meant that I think that it is possible, or even likely, that had we had these DES interviews when Michael was in his mid to late teens, it might have expedited his "figuring out" process and perhaps saved him some police drama. However, the judgment of sinfulness is not mine to make, and any of these is entirely possible: (a) I am mistaken in the potential benefit of DES interviews to those at risk for schizophrenia; (b) I wasn't ready to do good-enough DES interviews until more-or-less now; and/or (c) bad DES interviews might well be worse than nothing in the schizophrenic trajectory.]

What finally emerged from that process was what I now would say is a kind of operationalization of the concept of 'reality' to mean 'what others in appropriately similar circumstances will agree that they perceive', alongside:

(1) A hard-won *elimination* of the concept of 'reality' as something like "what there is independently of persons or their acts or believing or perceiving." (The circularity of this account of the concept--reality is 'what there is...'--is not something that I find myself able to escape. It feels entirely fatal to the concept itself.)

and

(2) A hard-won set of strategies -- some of them more or less automatic by now, others still requiring thought to some degree or other -- for determining when perceptual experience (especially auditory and to a lesser extent visual) is likely to be shared by others (again, adjusting for perspective). And while some of these strategies are more or less automatic, I would not characterize any of them as 'relying on an intuitive connection' between perception and reality in the operationalized sense. I don't think I see and hear stuff *as* 'public'. I see or hear it and issue a subsequent judgment about its public-ness. Sometimes that judgment happens quickly, with little or no thought, and sometimes it takes some reflection. [Russ comments: I wonder whether Michael's strategies may be useful to others who are diagnosed with schizophrenia. I am not in a position to know, but I would be happy to discuss this with him.]

Example: When I know that I'm alone in a room and I hear a voice whispering in my ear, I don't really have to think about whether it is 'real'. That judgment comes very quickly, perhaps even automatically. Even in that kind of case, however, I would not say that the auditory experience itself is 'as of something real' (nor 'as of something unreal'). Instead, reality or unreality (in the operationalized sense) of the

object of that experience is a separate thing. One reason for saying it this way is that I have no trouble (these days -- it wasn't always so) separating the two (i.e., the content of experience from its reality), and will do so quite readily when circumstances seem to point in that direction. For example: When I'm in a busy place and hear a conversation, determining whether it is real could be very challenging, and I know it would be so; in those situations, I typically make a quick judgment based on whatever evidence is close to hand, and just allow myself to change that judgment rapidly if needed. I don't think anything changes about the nature of the 'experience of the conversation' in that case. What changes is just a judgment about its 'reality'.

Michael comments after Russ's insertions: RE "I wonder whether Michael's strategies may be useful to others"

I also have no idea whether my personal strategies (which are always under development and revision) could be helpful for others. I've spoken at some length about such things with only two other people. (One of the great sins of modern psychiatry, since we're talking about sins here, is not affording people with psychiatric diagnoses such as mine the opportunity to talk to each other. I once attempted to become a 'licensed' something-or-other (I forget the exact title) but gave up when it became apparent that it would still not enable me to get such people together in a room to talk. To do that I'd probably need to become a psychiatrist, and a rogue one at that.) Those conversations revealed that each of us had developed various strategies, and while there was some overlap at some level of description, and occasionally some overlap even at the level of 'implementation' (example below), there was also considerable variation and even incompatibility.

Example of overlap: each of us uses reminders of some sort (sticky notes to ourselves, alarms on phones, whatever) whose purpose is to force one to pause, slow down, and think for a couple of minutes about what we are doing, and why. (More specifically, we found that we each ask ourselves similar questions, and send ourselves similar reminders.)

I wrote a lengthy account of one of my main strategies, and have gotten some (obviously self-selected and thus biased) positive feedback about it. The account is laced with a lot of philosophy, which may be distracting for some but it's pretty much essential for me. It is here:

<https://journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/michener-student/index.php/imsj/article/view/9486>

Quoting myself from that paper, this statement is my (current) considered opinion on the matter (attempting to say it carefully): "In any case, the point is neither to tout nor to denounce any way of coping, including the standard strategy of reality-testing. 'Psychosis' is not one thing—differences in 'psychotic' experiences and the situations and dispositions of those who have them suggest that a diversity of approaches to coping ought to be taken seriously." Happy to discuss further (which I guess is what is happening right now...) if that's worthwhile or interesting. Also happy to leave it there.

1:07:22 RTH: So I, I am interested in that too. So, so in the, like in the, you had a beep where you said you were sitting on a stump and thinking about sending your son....

1:07:35 Michael: Right.

1:07:36 RTH: And in that situation, do you experience the stump as real?

1:07:42 Michael: Well, I wasn't really experiencing the stump, but if I, I mean that that's, I, that's where I was sitting, but I wasn't... Do I experience the stump as real? Yes. [RTH: Mm-hmm.] I experience this chair as real. So I, I, I understand for example, that if I asked my wife to come upstairs and sit in the chair, she wouldn't look, look at me like, what are you talking about?

1:08:16 RTH: So do you the, I guess the question is when, when you, you said a minute ago [1:06:38], I, "what I mean by real is that other people would have the same experiences I've had."

1:08:26 Michael: Mm-hmm. I was trying to illustrate that by saying if I were to, if I were to ask my wife to come sit in the chair, she, she, it would be a normal request that she would not question like whether she would be able to do that or what I was asking her or something like that. But if I were to say "Behold! The second copy of eduroam," I wouldn't say that to anyone because they would say, "what are you talking about?"

1:09:07 RTH: [pause] It's, it's taken us pretty far away from this particular beep. But it is sort of at the heart of the, the heart of the deal. So, so there's something, there's something about the *chair* that leads you to *suspect* that your wife would come and sit in without complaint. Which is different from, well, your wife wouldn't see the eduroam letters suspended above the screen. So there's...

1:09:34 Michael: Correct. This is a, this is, I would say a hard-won [laughs] distinction for me. And I've paid a heavy price at certain times in my life for failing to make this distinction, especially in my twenties. Um, and I'm 500% better at it now than I was then. Um, but it's not, I'm not 100% accurate, even now, I have sometimes asked my wife or communicated with her in some way, and she has to respond to me by saying, "Michael, that's not real."

1:10:17 RTH: "No, Michael, that's not real."

1:10:25 Michael: That's more commonly with I, with sounds. So I have, for example, thought that she had something.... So she, she keeps her computer in the, in a kind of a desk near the kitchen. And I have occasionally asked her to turn the computer down or something like that. And her response is, "there's, there's no computer noise happening right now." All of which is to say I'm, I'm not 100% accurate at this. So I'm telling you my best guess. I think it's a pretty good guess in the case is... It's not a guess. I'm telling you my best estimate. I'm, I'm pretty confident in those estimates in the cases when I've needed to make that in order to communicate my experience to you. But I, it's not 100%.

1:11:20 RTH: Even now.

1:11:23 Michael: Even now. But, y'know, I know how the world works. I, y'know, I almost got a PhD in physics. I understand that words on the screen don't just pop out like that. I understand that the nature of that experience and the nature of the way computer screens and worlds work [laughs], that is very unlikely to be the kind of thing that I could say, "Hey Chris, look at this extra word!" But it doesn't, it doesn't, I don't *experience* that as unreal. I just *know* that it's not real.

1:12:06 RTH: Right. I think, I think I understand that. [Michael: Good.] I understand that, probably, in the same way that you understand it as, as, as a *fact* rather than as an *experiential reality*.

1:12:21 Michael: Um, I have to go. I teach...

1:12:26 RTH: Okay, good. Um, should we...Shall we do it again?

1:12:28 Michael: Uh, sure. It's...

They compare calendars.

From 55:38

Exercise for the reader:

Go back and see/hear Michael's discussion of the eduroam on the dropdown menu and of eduroam that is an inch in front. What can you say about the manner in which Michael talks about those two eduroams?

Russ's answer: To my ear, Michael talks about the dropdown eduroam in the same way that he talks about the inch-in-front eduroam—same matter-of-fact expression, same degree of detail, etc. That is one piece of evidence that the two eduroams are seen in experientially the same way.

Such evidence is not conclusive, of course, but it is important, and part of the DES skill is keeping track of such evidence as part of the effort to hear with fidelity what Michael is saying.

Agnes's answer: It seems that he is describing them in similar ways.

Michael's answer: I'm at a disadvantage, here, because I know what I meant at the time, so reading my own words (which is a little troubling, actually) 'without prejudice' is not easy. I certainly *took myself* to be describing both words in the same manner, and my answer to the exercise (giving myself a little benefit of the doubt!) is that I did so. I also still recall the experience (probably because of the beep -- without the beep I'm pretty sure it would have been quickly forgotten), and indeed they were identical (or near enough as casual observation plus memory can determine).

from 51:47

Exercise for the reader

Below are two questions. Are they the same or different? In what way?

1. Here is one way I might interpret what you said; is it correct?
2. Here is one way I might interpret what you said; can you give me a better way?

Russ's answer

I think those questions are fundamentally different.

(a) Question 1 is entirely about Agnes—it asks whether *Agnes* is right. Question 2 is (mostly) about *Michael*.

(b) Question 1 constrains the discussion to the interpretation being advanced. Question 2 has no such constraint.

(c) Question 1 says, in effect, *I'm a pretty smart person and I have a theory that I would like to validate. I would grudgingly be willing to have it invalidated, but I would prefer that you say I am right.* Question 2 says, in effect, *I, in my ignorance, but doing the best I can, have come up with this way of understanding, which I acknowledge is probably wrong. I hope you can demonstrate my ignorance to me and provide a deeper understanding.*

Said another way: Good questions come from, and convey, a genuine acceptance of ignorance.

3/9 Michael's answer

I get that they are supposed to be different, and of course they are. I also get that the 'natural' reading of the first might be that it is somewhat restrictive (in offering just two alternatives – yes or no). This restrictiveness could be dangerous if the respondent feels compelled (as one might on some sort of survey, for example) actually to answer with just a 'yes' or 'no', inasmuch as the respondent might be inclined to say 'yes' even if the correct answer is 'sort of'. (By the way this observation is more or less my main complaint about psychiatric 'rating scales'. They aren't quite 'yes/no' (at least not usually), but they do suffer from a similar problem—you aren't allowed to reframe the question, and in some cases if you try to do so you get 'dinged' (e.g., your PANSS score gets higher) for something else (like non-cooperativeness or failure to understand the question or some other malfeasance).

However, I'm not convinced that there is, in practice, much difference between the questions, in the present context. OK, maybe there is some super-subtle psychological effect of hearing one of them asked rather than the other. I have no idea about super-subtle psychological effects. But I do feel very free to answer your (Russ's and Agnes's) questions as I wish, including changing the question, offering alternatives, etc. So when one of you says "is that right?" (as has happened numerous times), I absolutely do not feel restricted to 'yes' or 'no', and I also feel entirely free to offer a better description, if I think I have one. So if I say 'yes' to *either* question, I mean, minimally, "more or less and also I cannot presently think of a better way to say it" and often I mean something stronger, such as "yes that sounds good and presently I doubt there's a much clearer way to say it."

(I am certainly not always so free in my responses – it is a testament to the two of you, because you are both very clearly (to me) non-judgmental. I have felt surprisingly 'non-on-guard' during these conversations.)

There is a related issue about what counts as 'better'. I'm not going to try to address it here, but just mention that what counts as a 'better' description is, I'd say, a very tricky question.

3/9 Russ comments: Michael's answer reveals a weakness/imperfection/limitation of this (and probably others of my) "exercise for the reader": It may appear that this exercise, and my response to it, suggest that I am a mind reader who understands Agnes's intention; and that my aim is to teach Agnes how to ask questions. Actually, neither of those is true.

I am not a mind reader, not of Agnes or of Michael or of anyone else. My aim (whether or not it was satisfactorily stated or accomplished) was to encourage Agnes (or any other person who vicariously walks alongside Agnes) to reflect on the source of / motivations behind her questions. She asked a yes/no question, and my antennae suggested that there might be value in encouraging her to reflect on something in the ballpark of *from whence did that yes/no question arise?* For the reasons Michael describes here, Yes/No questions (or their ilk) constrain/restrict/coerce. My exercise for the reader invited Agnes to reflect on what motivated her to ask a question that might constrain/restrict/coerce. Perhaps

she correctly understands that Michael, in these interviews or elsewhere, does not feel constrained/restricted/coerced, so there was no need to be worried about that. Perhaps she shares some of the same tendencies that led to the PANSS (and to most of the rest of psychology, psychiatry, and philosophy). Perhaps something else. I am not a mind reader. I noticed that she asked a (potentially constraining/restrictive/coercing) Yes/No question and I invited her to reflect on it.

Further, I don't want to teach Agnes to ask particular kinds of questions (here, to avoid asking Yes/No questions). To the extent that Agnes wants to learn how to "do DES," I want Agnes to develop her taste for grokking Michael's experience as Michael experiences it. *Out of that* will probably, in most situations, for most people, but not always, arise an appreciation for the bitterness of Yes/No questions.

That is, I understand that this exercise arose out of what I think of as a truly Socratic motivation: *I don't know* what motivates Agnes, but my antennae suggested that it was worthy of exploration. (My motivation was *not* what I think of as law-school Socratic, where the instructor knows the answer and tries to get the student to say it.)

RE "I absolutely do not feel restricted to 'yes' or 'no', and I also feel entirely free to offer a better description, if I think I have one."

I'm glad of that, and that has also been my observation.