

TRANSCRIPT WITH COMMENTARY

Olivia: A Podcast Journalist

Olivia Interview 4

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the March 10 interview with Olivia that is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/QOqKxV6_coc. In green are comments about and explanations of the Descriptive Experience Sampling process. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt

Olivia = Olivia R.

0:00 RTH: So this is your, gonna be your day 4, if I'm not mistaken. Might be 5.

0:09 Olivia: So that's 1, 2, 3. 4. So they've been three before this. Yeah.

0:24 RTH: And I'm guessing that Alek isn't gonna be here. I haven't heard from her, but the last I heard she was otherwise occupied, so she probably won't be here.

0:31 Olivia: She had a baby.

0:32 RTH: Yep. And, uh, and I have sent you a draft, basically, of the website that I might put up. If you look at that and are you

0:43 Olivia: Just by my best?

0:45 RTH: Okay.

0:45 Olivia: I could do it now. Is that helpful? I mean, I can't imagine that. Um,

0:51 RTH: Well, I, I want you to take your time and look at it because, because I don't want you to be *surprised* by it. I don't think you *will be* surprised at it, but I, but I don't want you to feel like, oh, Hurlburt backed me into the corner and said I had to tell, tell him about this. I, I would like to put it up onto the web more or less soon, but, but I'm, but I'm not, I, y'know, I there's other things going on in the world and I understand that. So, so sometime, relatively soon, if you would take a glance at it and see what you think.

1:21 Olivia: Okay. Yes, I will do that.

1:24 RTH: Anything else.

1:25 Olivia: How many sessions do you usually do with people?

1:29 RTH: Uh, four is a good number for a, for a study, but it depends on the study. Somewhere, somewhere, I would say between three or four, four-ish, and a hundred, [Olivia laughs]

depending on, depending on what it is that we're trying to, trying to do. A hundred is the rare, rare exception. But if you're try, if you're trying to find something that is, that varies over time [Olivia: Hmm.] like, uh, we have a study (that we've never yet published; I should get on Alek to do that) but a menstrual cycle, whether there's changes in menstrual cycle. And of course you've gotta sample a lot of times to see whether anything is really cyclic. So I think we sample maybe 30 times or something like that for, with folks across the cycle.

- 2:14 Olivia: I'm very interested that you said that, because it, it occurred to me yesterday. I thought, gosh, um, I wonder, y'know, I feel like I noticed these, like I noticed... So I, I run five kilometers every second day and I have an app that measures my time per kilometer. [RTH: Uh huh.] And I feel like my speed is cyclical according to my menstrual cycle. Um, and I, I thought, God, yeah, it, it must affect the way what's going on in your brain and the way you're thinking, um, as well.
- 2:46 RTH: Well, the, an, the answer to that is we have, I, I can't remember exactly, but I think what I would say about that (from recollection, not having looked at that recently), but is, is there, is there are differences across cycle. Most, I think we had a half, a dozen subjects and four of them had individual differences across subjects. But it, but they weren't the same across subjects. So they would average out. If you averaged across all the people, you would see nothing. But within individual people, you could say, well, this one changed that way, and this one change that other way, and this one change somehow.
- 3:19 Olivia: Mm. Well, that makes sense to me.
- 3:20 RTH: Yeah, it does. [Olivia: Yeah.] But what, what that means, most of the psychology is average across people. [Olivia: Yeah.] And, uh, so you won't find, you won't find the interesting stuff. So you have, you have to, you have to be willing to actually get the data. That's the hard part. So you got a sample with people for 30 days. [Olivia: Yeah.] And ...
- 3:39 Olivia: Because, but I was interested in, I mean, on a, on an individual level, not looking at, at cycles or anything, y'know, in some of the stuff that I read of your work, you are sort of, what you've said is most people are sort of on a spectrum in that they might think in words, 60% of the time, and then they might have visual, visual-imagery sort of thought, um, or an inner experience of visual imagery 20% of the time. And do you, when you get to the end of each, um, uh, like each person's study, sit down and then go back over their beeps and say, "alright, well, 60% of those were word beeps and 20% were picture beeps..." Or ...
- 4:24 RTH: So. Yes, yes and no is the answer to that. So I don't, I don't, I'm not particularly interested in counting picture beeps and speaking beeps, but I am interested in going back and seeing whether we can develop a, what I call a high fidelity sketch of your inner experience. And, and that *might* involve, well, Olivia's got 40% of this and 60% of that. And, and I don't have any objection to doing that if, if Olivia has two different kinds of experiences and they fall into these categories pretty easily, then I'm gonna count them. [Olivia: Mmm.] But I also would say, I'm, I'm *more* interested in what the idiographic unique-to-Olivia features are. And that, that is really only discoverable by

going by going back. Like we've been working--I can't actually remember, cuz we've been, it's been a while since we've done this--but, but we've been trying to figure out some things about your imagery, if I'm, if I'm recalling correctly and, uh, [Olivia: Yeah. Yeah.] and, uh, y'know, we're now on the fourth day, we're, we're figure that out. So it's, it's not so much a matter of *counting* them because maybe you, weren't very good at noticing 'em the first time around or the second time around or whatever. So it's a matter of trying to take all the information we got and get the.. what is it that Wood, Woodward uses (Woodward and whatever his name is used to say), the, the "best available picture of the truth," or whatever.

4:24 Russ comments: Woodward and Bernstein's phrase was actually "best available *version* of the truth."

5:43 Olivia: Mm. Who said that?

5:45 RTH: Uh, Woodward and... *All, All the President's Men*, the Nixon, Nixon, Watergate people.

5:52 Olivia: The second time a reference to *All, All the President's Men* has come up in, um, my work in the past week. [RTH: Huh.] Strange coincidence. It's interesting. Yes. I do remember the last session (and possibly the session before) really talking a lot about these sort of vague visual images that I experienced, which is interesting now. And I think maybe this was actually what, um, made me start thinking about like the, the po, the possibility of my menstrual cycle impacting this. Because I noticed, so I did a couple of beeps yesterday, and I did actually a couple this, this morning. Um, and I, I noticed my inner experience in the past sort of 24 hours to be quite dominated by, by music, um, different little bits of music. Um, but there, there, there always being a sort of soundtrack [laughs] to my inner experience. Sometimes all, that's all there was. And sometimes that soundtrack was behind other things. And I could pinpoint what that music was in all of the cases but one. Um...

7:05 RTH: Well, I, I would say let's, let's start with the beeps from today, being as how they're, the fresher beeps. [Olivia: Yep.] And I've got, I have probably exactly 47 minutes. I've got a meeting at 2:30 that's just pretty has to start pretty promptly, so [Olivia: Okay.] I've got something in 45 minutes. We'll get... We'll go as far as we can get. And, uh, then we'll think about what we're gonna do after that. [Olivia: Okay.] So let's, let's start with today, and that's gonna be like your third or fourth beep overall? Is that...?

7:33 Olivia: It was the third one. [RTH: Okay.] I did three today and two yesterday.

7:37 RTH: Alright. Let's start with the third one, which would be from early this morning...

SAMPLE 4.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE (starting the interview with today's samples)

7:41 Olivia: Very early this morning. Um, and, and it's, I mean, it's so funny. So I've written down [Comment: in her sampling notebook.] "Song in my head, low croy, crony, crooning, male voice. Can't place it." So [laughs] I had this song in my head and now I can't conjure it up. Um, but at the time it was sort of like a, I don't know, 5-to-10-second refrain, a single sort of little loop of a song that (I don't know how to explain this other

than that, um, it was a song, and I knew that if I heard the song, I would be, I would say, and... Like, I, I'm, I'm confident it was a real song, and it must have entered my consciousness from hearing it somewhere. (But that I don't know.) [RTH: maybe.] Um, but so I knew I wasn't gonna be able to sing it out loud if I needed to, but that I knew what it was, and if I heard it, I would recognize it, which is very weird. Um, like... Yeah! So, so it's kind of like, it was very, I don't know if that, y'know, you could say it's, it was in my inner experience, but it was kind of turned right down, but it, it doesn't feel like a volume thing. It just feels like a tangibility-of-experience thing. So the song was there. I was hearing it. But I would, would not have been able to recreate it, but I would have been able to identify it if I'd heard it externally.

9:05 RTH: So let me ask some question to clarify my, make sure I understand what you're communicating here. So this is an auditory experience. *I hear this*. In my imagination...

9:15 Olivia: I hear it in the way that I hear things in my imagination. Yes.

9:20 RTH: And is that different from the way you hear things in the external world?

9:23 Olivia: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think we didn't, we speak about this in one, we spoke about this in one session where we sort of used this analogy of hearing a recorded, um, hearing a recorded version of my voice versus producing an internal version, which, um... So that's in, but which one of those was it? Hmm. Yeah. Look, I have real trouble with this distinction of hearing in my imagination.

9:54 RTH: So let, let me, let me ask, let me ask you, let me ask you, you this. So in our, in our conversation over the last few minutes, sometimes I've been talking and sometimes you've been talking. [Olivia: Um hm.] You're buying that? [laughs] We're, we're in agreement so far? [Olivia: I would agree with that.] And would you say when I'm talking that you *hear* me? Is, is, does that seem right?

10:12 Olivia: Yes.

10:12 RTH: And when you're talking, does that seem like exactly the same thing as when I'm talking? Or does it seem different?

10:18 Olivia: Yes. Different.

10:20 RTH: So hearing in the real world is very different from speaking in the real world.

10:25 Olivia: Yes.

10:26 RTH: Without trying to pin it down as to how it's different, it's un, undeniably different? You're not gonna confuse *my* speaking with *your* speaking? [spoofs himself] *I wonder, I wonder whether that was Russ speaking or whether that was me speaking!* I mean, you're not gonna do that.

10:26 Russ comments: That may seem like a far-too-elementary distinction, but with respect to inner experience, it is necessary to make sure that we are starting at the basics.

Many philosophers, for example, refer to inner speaking as a *hearing* phenomenon when (most often) there actually is the phenomenon of speaking, not of hearing. So we need to start at the beginning.

In her 9:23 turn, Olivia expressed her difficulty about characterizing hearing in her imagination. That difficulty could arise from an unclear phenomenon, or from the operation of presuppositions—inner hearing *must not* be like external hearing *because I can tell the difference between inner and external hearing*. So we will have to work at bracketing those presuppositions.

10:40 Olivia: No, I'm not gonna do that.

10:41 RTH: Alright. So, so the, the hearing of me, that's what I would call it like a, an external hearing phenomenon. And what I wanna know is whether the inner hearing was more or less like that, that you, you, when you're listening to me, you can hear the timbre of voice and, uh, [coughs] cough that I have, cuz I've got a cold, and whatever is it...

11:09 Olivia: [looks skyward] I mean, it feels more like that than me speaking, [RTH: Okay.] than, than, than the phenomenon of me speaking, but not,... I mean, I wanna say just a bit softer, but not, y'know, it's not a volume thing. It just feels like, I mean, I guess when you are speaking, I know where that sound is coming from, right? And I can place that sound in time and space, and, and, um, it has a more real quality than this song that I'm hearing on a loop in my head that,... As I said, I mean, *softer* seems a kind of useful word, but it's not right. It's kind of further away and less real.

11:55 RTH: Okay. So it's a, it's a *hearing phenomenon* that in some way, doesn't seem quite as real as when *I'm* talking...

12:04 Olivia: Because it had the quality of a man's voice. It wasn't *me* singing or producing the sound of this song. I was *hearing*, um, y'know, like a sort of crew, like a country, there was like an acoustic guitar, um, and a man's voice. And that man's voice was not *me making that man's voice*.

12:27 RTH: And by an acoustic guitar, do you mean it's like, I'm hearing a song with accompaniment. [Olivia: Yeah.] And just acoustic guitar, like a guy playing a guitar.

12:35 Olivia: Uh, there may have been like other little bits and pieces of a sort of country-ish feel kind of band.

12:40 RTH: Okay. So I hear a guy singing a country-ish kind of a thing with guitar accompaniment (and maybe some other stuff I'm not, so I'm not too sure). [Olivia: Mm.] Is that, is that right?

12:56 Olivia: Correct. Yeah.

12:56 Russ comments: We have established, to RTH's satisfaction, that the phenomenon is a *hearing*. It is not a speaking, and it is not a knowing the characteristics of. That is important progress.

12:57 RTH: And, and maybe it's like, the volume is turned down, [speaks sotto voce] but if I turn the volume down like this, it's apparently *not like that*.

13:05 Olivia: Yeah. It's not like that. It's like volume on reality is turned down.

13:09 RTH: Okay. That.. Fair, fair enough. So in some way, the volume of, the connection to reality is in some way weakened. [Olivia nods affirmatively] Okay. And is there anything else going on in your experience at this moment?

13:09 Russ comments: It is tempting to explore whether the "volume on reality is turned down" is a metaphor with no phenomenal characteristics, or if it has phenomenal characteristics, what those characteristics are. That might be helpful as part of the bracketing of presuppositions described in the comment at 10:26. However, RTH does not pursue this because he is of the opinion that we have gotten as far as we can in this sample. If the volume-turned-down-on-reality phenomenon remains important, it will occur on later beeps, and we can explore it then.

13:25 Olivia: I haven't written anything down. Um, y'know, this is once again, so these three, the first two are in the setting that I described before of sitting in bed with a two-year-old cl climbing all over me. And, um, y'know, it's funny because in some of the other beeps I've noted down what's happening in my physical surroundings. Um, but more from are a note-taking, for the purposes of note-taking and trying to, I think, and trying to remember more about the beep when I speak back to you rather than saying... [RTH: Right.] I mean, in fact, the beep before I've actually said "my physical environment is not present to my consciousness." So look, I haven't written anything down, uh, so I feel like it's the same sort of situation as y'know, it's not, it's not really, um,

14:19 RTH: So Aspasia is there, but you're prob, probably not paying attention to her. At this particular moment you're into the country song.

14:26 Olivia: Well, and, but it's funny because you say like, and on one hand, yes. Um, I mean, I am paying attention to her in the way that in any of these beeps, I'm sort of attending to my immediate surroundings by, y'know, the example of scooping the yogurt, alright, like I think I... I find it really interesting that, um, [pause] y'know, like I'm certainly not...[laughs] . So, so my partner does this thing where he, he can really just tune his surroundings right out to the point where like Aspasia can be saying, "Dad! Dad! dad! Dad!" And he, it's almost, I don't know if he can't hear or her, or he's choosing to ignore her because he's doing something or something. I can't do that. If she is saying "Mom, mom, mom, mom, mom," I'm like, my attention is pulled to her. [RTH: Okay.] Um, so it doesn't feel like that, like I'm, y'know, have withdrawn into a cocoon and I'm just focusing on this song by any means. Like, it's the morning thing, y'know, I'm sort of probably on one hand starting to think about what to do today. And, um, but, but the most, so it's not that I'm not paying attention. It's that, I guess that is, um, like, uh, a very, it's a kind of a fringe experience... Or it's kind of just like this low lying continuous, always there. So

15:47 RTH: Down in the weeds, down in the weeds, so to speak. [Olivia: Yeah.] So, so I'm, I, I think that it's not possible to distinguish between *down-in-the-weeds* and *nothing*.

- 15:47 Russ comments: See Hurlburt, R. T., & Schwitzgebel, E. (2011). Little or no experience outside of attention? *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 18(1), 234–252.
- 15:57 [RTH continues] So I have, I have, when I say “nothing going on,” I don’t really mean “*absolutely* nothing going on.” I mean, it’s down enough in the weeds that I haven’t made a *theme* of it. [Olivia: Yeah.] And I haven’t, I haven’t, I haven’t brought it into anything like the same centrality as the, the country guy, country singer.
- 15:57 Russ comments: To say that Olivia has “not made a *theme*” of some potential experiential aspect (in this case, her physical surroundings in the bed) is another way of saying that those physical surroundings are “not *directly apprehended*” or “not *before the footlights of consciousness*.” That is, they are “not part of what DES calls *pristine inner experience*.”
- 16:14 Olivia: Yeah, and that feels like a good way to describe it. Because, y’know, I think I’ve started stopping and thinking, okay. After I’ve written down the initial thought, I’ve thought, well, what am I, what am I doing? Where am I? And, y’know, once I stop and think about it, I go, well, obviously I’m not *not paying* attention to that [RTH: Right.] because I’m, I’m doing stuff. And I mean, in one of the last one I’ve got, which is a really boring one, but like, y’know, I’m, I’m, I was literally pulling toast out, toast out of the toaster, as it, as the beep goes off. And how much am I like, y’know, I was using toast tongs, cuz it was kind of down in the toaster, I’m obviously, but very in the weeds. So it’s not *not there*. It’s definitely not *not there*, but it’s just not there in a way that I’m really thinking.
- 16:14 Russ comments: We will undoubtedly have to return to these issues in later sampling, because it still sounds like there is a presupposition operating: because I skillfully respond, it *must have been* in my direct, before-the-footlights-of-consciousness experience. I don’t think that is true—people can respond skillfully to many things that are not directly, thematically, experienced.
So the object will be to see if we can get that presupposition bracketed and *then* discover whether Olivia still has an in-the-weeds penumbra of directly-apprehended-but-at-a-very-peripheral-level experience. Maybe we will figure that out; maybe not.
- 16:55 RTH: Okay. Then I think I’m good. [Olivia: Okay.] So what I, what I’ve got is I’m hearing this there’s other stuff going on. I’m probably paying attention in some minor way. [Olivia: Yeah.] But the, but most of my, maybe all of my, probably not all of my, but by far the most amount of my I’m listening to this guy singing a song, which I don’t actually, actually know what it is, [Olivia: Yeah.] but it was, it was recognizable at the time or ...
- 17:20 Olivia: It was recognizable at the time. And I honestly wrote that down thinking I would be able, that when I saw this note, that song would come back. And I’m quite amazed that it hasn’t at all.

SAMPLE 4.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

- 17:31 RTH: Okay. alright. I’m good with that. Number 4.

17:35 Olivia: Okay. So this is a bit later on. And actually, um, Darcy has taken Aspasia downstairs and I'm just enjoying like an extra five minutes sitting in bed, looking at my phone. And I was, um, was thinking, I was, [sighs] I *think* I was thinking the words. I *know* I was thinking the *thought* (whether or not I was thinking the words) that, so a friend had shared a link to an interesting documentary on Facebook. And, um, I had clicked on that link and was sort of had just absorbed what the documentary was and was realizing that this documentary was quite old. (I had heard someone talking about it on the radio, I think at the end of last year.) And it was right in that moment that I was thinking, *oh, this is not* (cuz I think, y'know, the, the way my friend had shared it, I was like, *oh, this might be an interesting new thing*). And, and the thought was, "oh, this, y'know, oh, this is an old thing." So whether or not that was, um, a languaged thought of "this is old" or just a more kind of notional thought of *this is old* I can't say.

18:45 [Olivia continues] The radio was also on. And they were, it was, they were on the radio, they were talking about aged care and y'know, like I, that had entered, I wrote that down as well, because even the words had the, the exact words because the announcer had said, um, "do you," like, "do y'know someone who lives in aged care?" Something along those lines. And, and the words had kind of pierced my consciousness. Um, and I think also in the background, I was thinking about an, a surprising connection to me. So the friend had shared this link, and another friend of mine on Facebook, who I was not aware was friends with this friend had responded. So I was also kind of considering the surprising connection between those two people.

19:34 RTH: And all of that seems like it's going on before the footlights of my consciousness? This is not just context. This is happening to some degree simultaneously?

19:44 Olivia: Yeah. Yeah.

19:45 RTH: Okay. And one of them more prominent than the other?

19:48 Olivia: Yeah. The, the sort of response to the documentary feeling, *oh, this was an old thing* was the primary, the primary experience.

19:55 RTH: And by primary, do you mean 60-20-20 or 90-5-5? 50-25-17 or what...?

20:02 Olivia: Let's go 70-20-10.

20:06 RTH: Okay. The 20 is aged care and the 10 is the surprising connection? [Olivia: Yeah.] Okay. Well, let's go with the 70 then. So I'm, I'm quite confident that I am thinking to myself, *oh, this is an, this is an old thing*. [Olivia: Yeah.] But I'm *not* so sure whether there are words involved.

20:25 Olivia: Yeah. I don't know. And I've written down, "this is old" in quotation marks. I think it was, I think it was a word thing.

20:33 RTH: This is old, quote, "this is old," unquote, not, "this is an old thing"?

20:37 Olivia: Yeah.

20:39 RTH: Okay. And, and I understand you to be saying “this is old” *probably* is in words. Whereas the one, the radio “aged care” thing, that *was* in words. I was, there was, so there’s no doubt about *that* being in words, [Olivia: Mm hmm.] even though it’s only a 20 thing, whereas the 70 thing, I’m *not so sure* it’s in words. Is that right?

21:05 Olivia: Yeah.

21:06 RTH: Okay. And if it is in words, is it this exact words like starting with “Oh”? “Oh, this is an old thing,” unquote, or just, “this is an old thing.”

21:19 Olivia: I’ve just written, “this is old.” Maybe it was “Oh! This is old.”

21:30 RTH: But you’re not sure.

21:30 Olivia: Not “this is an old *thing*.”

21:32 RTH: Okay. Yeah. I misread my own notes. Sorry about that. So “this is old.” And so for sure, the idea *this is old* is present. [Olivia: Yes.] There’s no doubt about that. [Olivia: Mm hmm.] The question is whether that is *worded* as in quote “this is old,” or quote, “Oh! This is old” unquote.

21:58 Olivia: Or whether it’s just me thinking ...

22:00 RTH: Somehow

22:03 Olivia: ...*this is old* in a thought, in a, yeah, specified bit kind of [gestures a motion away from her]

22:10 RTH: Right. And either one of those things is possible, and I don’t have a favorite. I, I, I do recognize that it’s somewhat more difficult to grasp a thought that doesn’t have words. If the words are there, that’s *easy*. I can tell you exactly what the words were. I was think, saying to myself quote “this is old” and that’s the end of the story. But if I have to say, “well, y’know, I’m not so about the words,” that’s harder.

22:10 Russ comments: Here RTH tries to level the playing field--to give a slight nudge to the wordless option. There are two reasons: wordless thoughts are harder to describe, and many people believe that wordless thoughts are impossible. That is, the playing field was likely already tilted in the other direction, and RTH here tries to level that tilt slightly.

22:32 Olivia: Mm.

22:33 RTH: But I’m, but I’m not trying to talk you into or out of there being words or not words.

22:33 Russ comments: The challenge of DES is to level the playing field without leading the witness. So in 22:33 RTH undermines his own previous leveling effort.

22:42 Olivia: Yeah. And I, I, I don't [pause] know, and it, it may be also kind of *both* in a way. It may be that the words, "this is old" are there, but I was kind of thinking a bit *more* than just, "this is old." I was thinking, *oh, this is my friend who also produces documentaries. And I'm surprised that she's only just come across this.* Um, and oh, this is about like, oh, well, I, yeah, like there was definitely some of that like, *oh, MaryAnne, y'know, like, I'm surprised you haven't heard of this,* but, y'know, and that's all kind of great. So, yeah.

22:42 Russ comments: For privacy reasons, at 23:12 we changed the name to "MaryAnne."

23:21 RTH: So there's, there's a penumbra or a halo or something of a bunch of context-y, but not just context-y kinds of partial, partially realized thinkings involved in this.

23:35 Olivia: Yep. Yeah.

23:36 RTH: And *maybe* this, the, the center of it seems, the center of gravity, I guess you might say, of it seems to be, *this is old*, and maybe that is spoken, but if it *is* spoken, it's not the whole thing. It's the, it would be an articulation of a *piece* of this experience. Is that fair?

23:56 Olivia: [nods affirmatively] Yes.

23:57 RTH: Okay. So that sounds sort like what we were talking about in the first, in the first beep that it, it's not that your experience is snapped [snaps his fingers] together about one thing to the exclusion of everything else, but rather that it's, there might be a one thing that's in the center, but there's still the, there's still the, what I called the penumbra a minute ago, the [Olivia: Mm.] other things that are not *gone*, but not *there*, either.

24:32 Olivia: Yeah.

24:33 RTH: Okay. Fair enough.

24:36 Olivia: And, and in a strange way, I, I mean, look, and this may not be interesting to you, but I feel like, I mean, I like the kind of metaphor of I halo [looks up, hands raised], um, with a kind of core and then a halo. And then weirdly, if we're gonna talk in that kind of visual metaphor, it feels like the words, "do y'know, someone who lives in aged care" from the radio are penetrating the halo from the side, (which is where the, the radio is coming from, it's on the shelf to the right of me). And, and I almost feel like it's just kind of *getting in*, in a way that, um, there was no halo of thoughts around aged. I mean, y'know, the whole, obviously aged care is a big and complex. And I thankfully do not know anyone at the moment who lives in aged care. But it's a, there's, it's in a terrible situation in Australia with under-resourcing and all this. So it's you news story about that, and obviously COVID, what that was like and continues to be like in aged-care homes. I'm not thinking *any of that* stuff now. It's just the words kind of penetrating my thoughts.

25:38 RTH: So how much of, how much of penetrating my thoughts (excuse me), how much of penetrating my thoughts is *experiential* and, and how much of that is *metaphorical*? Do you, does it feel like the words are coming at you [points at the side of his head] in a, in a, in a realistic...

- 25:58 Olivia: Well it doesn't feel like they're coming at me in a visual way. I just think once we are going with this metaphor of a kind of a thought and a halo around it, it feels like it's coming in from the side. But I mean, y'know, it's just, like I said before, about my perceived sort of inability to ignore, and this goes for all kinds of situations... Do y'know how some people can read in a cafe or work in a cafe? I find it very hard because y'know, the, when I hear external sounds, and especially when those sounds are voices, they penetrate, and I hear, I cannot help but hear and listen to them. So that radio in this situation feels like, like that experience, like, [RTH: Okay.] coming in without my necessarily welcoming it in.
- 26:40 RTH: Okay. So the penetration, and the penetration and the halo: that is metaphorical. It's not like I see [holds hands up and forms a halo circle] or whatever experience of something and it's being pierced. I don't see it being pierced. What, what I experience is these words coming unbidden, unwelcomed, into my experience. Not that I don't want to hear them or whatever, not that I'm trying to keep them out, but they're, they're, they are penetrating me. Is that, is that right? [Olivia: Yes.] So a big, a big part of the, of, of what makes the work that I do inter, interesting as well as difficult is the sorting-out of what is metaphorical and what's not. Cuz people like metaphors. I like metaphors. Everybody likes metaphors. But, but, uh, we gotta, we gotta be careful that we don't, *oh man, she's got a visual halo here and there's these words coming from the outside.*
- 27:43 Olivia: But don't we so often lean on metaphors to describe internal experiences because, because if we don't have that metaphor, we have no way to describe it.
- 28:02 RTH: Well, I think that's letting you off the hook a little bit too easily. But, uh, I think I, I'm a fan of metaphors. I love metaphors. I think they're cool. And I, I try to use them when I can. But, uh, but they mask, they mask the actual sensory experience. And they're sometimes *confused* for the sensory experience. So people, people speak in metaphor and they're, and they're understood as describing a, an experienced event.
- 28:32 Olivia: But so much of the way we describe our sensory experience is metaphor.
- 28:38 RTH: Yeah. But it doesn't, but it doesn't have to be. Much of our sensory experience is actually sensory. [Olivia: Mmm.] And, uh,
- 28:44 Olivia: But even, y'know, when, if you go to a doctor and you say I've got a pain here and they say, "is it a burning pain or a stabbing pain?" I mean, that is literally the language. [Child's voice off camera: Hi Mommy!] Hello. Sorry, my Aspasia has just, [RTH: Um hm. I hear her.] is this ... [takes off headphones and disappears from view] [to Aspasia] Hello Aspasia. I'm just on a call. Okay. I'll be done soon. You have a nice sleep? Yeah. [Olivia returns] Alright.
- 29:19 RTH: So yes, *stabbing* and, and *burning* and whatever for, for pain that those are other terms we use. And those are to some degree metaphorical. But those, those are, are also pretty descriptive. Whereas if *it's like a bayonet was slicing like a, like a German soldier was stabbing me with a bayonet!* Now, now we're into metaphor that's, y'know...

29:19 Russ comments: This is a rather weird example, and not particularly informative. Here's a better example. Suppose someone says "Her talking is like fingernails on a chalkboard." That phrase could be straightforwardly descriptive--the person is saying he hears a high-pitched grating sound. Alternatively, the phrase could be entirely metaphorical--the person is conveying that the talking is obnoxious, not necessarily for its sensory qualities but perhaps because of its content. And the talk could be some combination of the two.

Many common phrases ("I was seeing red!" for example) are entirely metaphorical for some folks. For some, the color red has nothing actual to do with the situation—they are invoking the shared meaning of extremely angry. However, for others, the color red itself has an inner perceptual significance—they mean that their experience did indeed have a red color to it.

29:43 Olivia: Yeah. Yeah.

29:45 RTH: And so, so I, I think, I, I agree that *all* language is metaphorical, actually. Every word that everyone, any time speaks about anything probably is to some degree metaphorical. So I'm not, I'm not discounting what you're saying. I'm just trying to say, we should know the metaphoricity of which we speak. [Olivia: Metaphoricity! I like that!] But let's, yeah, let's, let's go on to number 5.

SAMPLE 4.5 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

30:10 Olivia: Okay. So number 5, I feel is an uninteresting one.

30:10 Russ comments: When a DES participant says "this is uninteresting," it often (probably usually) indicates that there is a strong presupposition in the vicinity. Presuppositions hide experience from the experiencer; the more heavy-handed the presupposition, the less experience is directly apprehended.

The logic is simple: DES asks for descriptions of experience, nothing more and nothing less. Descriptions of experience are the center of interest in DES. "This is not interesting" is a signal that the DES participant is going to avoid describing the experience that DES has requested, is going to avoid what is of interest. That suggests that a presupposition is at work.

30:14 [Olivia continues] And this is on my first... I was pulling toast out of the toaster. Um, and I was also listening to the radio (and honestly, I didn't note down what was coming in on the radio; and I can't remember it. (And whether I would've remembered it with the same degree of accuracy as I remembered the, um, aged-care one, I don't know.) But I did find this, this beep interesting. And I've found, um, often in the, like in the doing of just mundane things, sometimes I feel like there's *no* inner exper [laughs] experience. Like...

30:14 Russ comments: Olivia here has made a statement that has the form of a generalization about her inner experience: sometimes I feel like there's no inner experience." DES refers to such statements as *faux generalizations*, where *faux* is intended to emphasize that the statement *looks like* a generalization but it is not *really* a generalization (a true generalization would be the result of carefully examining a sequence of experiences and

drawing extracting a characteristic that actually conveys the examined sequence). DES avoids faux generalizations, so RTH will have to help Olivia bracket that train of thought.

30:47 RTH: So let's, let's, let's try to stick with this particular beep and then come back and talk about the, *sometimes in general* kind of, kind of thing. So in this, so in this particular beep I'm pulling the toast out of the toaster with tongs, and the radio's on. And what's in my experience, possibly nothing?

31:05 Olivia: I mean, if anything, I'm paying attention to the toast, in that I'm pulling it out of the toaster. And I guess I am, as I said, I'm, I'm, I'm not doing that completely mindlessly in the way that you might just pull toast out of the toaster when you're half asleep, because I had, y'know, assessed that I needed the toast tongs, got the toast tongs, was using the toast tongs, and, y'know, that's a slightly less autopilot, um, experience than just picking up a piece that is sticking out of a toaster the way it *should*.

31:05 Russ comments: To RTH's ear, this is another statement of the presupposition that if I skillfully do something, it *must have been* in my direct, before-the-footlights-of-consciousness experience (see the discussion at 16:14). The clue is Olivia's use of the word *because*: "I'm not doing that completely mindlessly... *because* I had.. assessed that I needed the toast tongs..." *Because* signals a speculation about causation, not a description of experience.

31:44 [Olivia continues] Um, y'know, I think I am somehow, um, aware, y'know, like a, [clears throat] the toast was visually interesting to me in that it was raisin toast. So I, but y'know, like I, so I think the toast is very much was in my experience, but really kind of mundane low level way. And, and maybe it's, it's one of those in the weeds thing. It's just that there was nothing else going on so that I'm able to pay attention to the weeds.

32:15 RTH: So, so let, let me unpack this. The toast was raisin toast or whatever. So, uh, are you seeing the raisin-ness of the toast? Is that?... What are you seeing?

32:25 Olivia: I think, I mean, at that moment, I'm kind of looking down, but I'm seeing the, y'know, the raisin profiles. Um [raises eyebrows, shrugs shoulders] I mean, I'm, I'm, I feel like I, um...The fact of the raisin-toast-ness of the toast made it more visually remarkable and maybe made its visual, its appearance penetrate my consciousness more than a normal piece of toast? [shrugs shoulders]

32:25 Russ comments: It might be worthwhile to spell out what RTH hears from a DES participant. He basically filters out the subjunctifiers ("I think," "I mean") except to register that they weaken whatever comes next; filters out context statements ("I'm kind of looking down"); filters out causation claims ("The fact of the raisin-toast-ness of the toast made it"). To illustrate we have crossed out what basically goes in one of his ears and out the other:
~~"I think, I mean, at that moment, I'm kind of looking down, but I'm seeing the, y'know, the raisin profiles. Um [raises eyebrows, shrugs shoulders] I mean, I'm, I'm, I feel like I, um...The fact of the raisin-toast-ness of the toast made it more visually remarkable and maybe made its visual, its appearance penetrate my consciousness more than a normal piece of toast?"~~

That leaves “I’m seeing the raisin profiles, visually remarkable, its visual, its appearance penetrates my consciousness.”

He’ll check out that hearing in his next turn.

33:00 RTH: So let me see whether, let me say what I’ve heard you say and see whether this is right. “I’m engaged skillfully in the act of taking the toast out. [Olivia: Um hmm.] And in my experience at the moment while I do this is mostly prominently the *raisins* in this toast. I’m seeing the raisins. And it’s not bec....”

33:22 Olivia: I wouldn’t say prominently the raisins. Just that the raisins are there.

33:29 RTH: The raisins are there equally with the rest of the toast? Or more than the rest of the toast?

33:33 Olivia: Equally, equally with the rest of the toast.

33:36 RTH: So I’m seeing the raisin toast, but I’m seeing it in a way that doesn’t seem to matter as far as the pulling it out of the toaster. Is that right?

33:45 Olivia: Yes.

33:46 RTH: So I’m, I’m, I’m seeing the visual characteristics of the toast sort of *separate from the* skill, taking the toast out of the toaster. Obviously they’re connected, they’re coming through my same eyeballs and whatever I’m, I’m, I’m using those things. But, but I’m *not* in interested in the *action* of taking the toast out. I’m interested in the *visual display* of the toast.

34:06 Olivia: Yeah. Yeah. That feels accurate.

34:06 Russ comments: Recall our comment at 30:47—Olivia had suggested that there was “in the doing of just mundane things, sometimes I feel like there’s no inner experience”; we considered that a faux generalization and avoided discussion of it. Now we have seen that “there’s no inner experience” is not a high-fidelity characteristic of this particular experience: instead of no inner experience, there was a sensory concentration on a visual aspect. This is a good example of why DES brackets faux generalizations. It has turned out that even the specific instance that occasioned the faux generalization is not an instance at all. DES is aimed at true generalizations. It examines carefully a randomly selected series of experiences, and then produces a characterization that is based carefully and directly on that series. Much of psychological science is (unfortunately in our view) based on faux generalizations. It would request that Olivia expand on her “no inner experience” statement, and then create a theory based on that expansion. From our point of view, the original faux generalization is the result of presuppositions, not apprehension, and any requested expansion would reify the presuppositions.

34:08 RTH: Okay. So what I would say, if you want to go back when, when I get around to posting this video, if you want to go back [he is referring to 31:05, 31:45, 32:25 etc.] and watch yourself tell, tell me about this, you’ll, you’ll see that you’re embarrassed and shy about it, which is what almost everybody, the way everybody is when they describe what I call

sensory awareness. [Olivia: Mmm.] When you describe the sensory aspect of things, people are, people have a hard time believing, I guess, first off that that that's, that could possibly be the central portion of my, experience, that I could be into just the way the toast looks. But it's more, more than that (and now I'm gonna, I'm talking a little bit beyond what is in, in your experience here), but it, but, but the, the word *sensual* means the, means *sexual* as well as, as *sensory* [Olivia: (nods affirmatively) Mmm.] and the privacy of these things are, are related to each other's. So for you to expose the sensory aspect of yourself is *fairly close* to exposing the sexuality of yourself. [Olivia: (nods affirmatively) Mmm.] And people are, people are mostly reluctant about that, mostly shy or, or, or whatever. And if you wanna watch what, what that's like for you, well, you can roll this tape and can watch it, but it's...

35:29 Olivia: Good! I look forward to it.

35:30 RTH: The, for, from my, from my perspective, when I see that kind of embarrassment about talking it, I I'm, I'm *expecting* that she's gonna say, "well, I'm, I'm somehow interested in the sensory aspect of this—it doesn't have anything to do with the motor stuff," because that's the way people look when they talk like that. [Olivia: Hmm.] Not, not that I'm not that I was, I was going to accuse you of that or whatever, or, or reach that conclusion. But it, y'know, I've been doing this for a long time, so I've, I've seen that look. And it it's, it it's up to... To say what I feel [Olivia: Mmm.], to describe my sensations, is a in, intensely personal thing.

35:30 *Russ comments:* RTH's "accuse" and "reach that conclusion" are pretty clumsy locutions. What he is trying to say here is that he did *not* use Olivia's behavioral cues to *infer* that Olivia was experiencing sensory awareness—he bracketed those cues and allowed Olivia to provide direct descriptions of the sensory aspects—then no inference was required (you may judge for yourself the extent to which he led the witness). DES is not about inference; it is about helping people to get into a position where they can describe with fidelity. RTH's explanation to Olivia was not a description of inference, but an aside, a reflection of his holding Olivia as a co-investigator—he thought she might be interested in that commentary.

36:14 Olivia: Mm. Mm. Yeah. That makes sense.

36:15 RTH: Because you can, you can say to the external world, "I was taking out the, taking the toast out," and, and that's no big deal because everybody can see you taking the toast out. But when you say, "but I wasn't really paying attention to taking the toast out. I was seeing the shape of the toast and the, the way the raisins were," that's, that's privately Olivia.

36:38 Olivia: Mm mm. Yep.

36:41 RTH: And it's, for that reason (I *think*) that sensory awareness very often comes, starts to come out in the third or fourth interview because people haven't been, they don't know about it. They're shy about it. They're bashful about it. They not sure that they can trust me or whatever to deal with that [shrugs], y'know, things take a while. [Olivia: Yeah.]

- 36:41 Russ comments: “The third or fourth interview” is a reference to Hurlburt, R. T., Heavey, C. L., & Bensaheb, A. (2009). Sensory awareness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 16 (10-12), 231-251.
- 37:00 [RTH continues] So! At, that was a little bit of an aside. [Olivia: Hmm.] And then there’s the, the radio. I’m, the radio is on.
- 37:00 Russ comments: They repair an audio glitch.
- 38:12 [RTH resumes] So you’re listening to the radio or the, I should say the radio’s on. I haven’t, we haven’t yet determined whether you’re really listened to it. The radio is on, are you, is, is that in the, in the weeds? Or is it in the direct access? I’m....
- 38:26 Olivia: Feels a little above the weeds. Um, obviously not enough above the weeds that I remembered what it was talking about. Um, I didn’t note it down. Uh, Yeah. I mean, look, we’re a household that has the radio on a lot onto a sort of the equivalent of an NPR kind of station. Um, so there’s a lot of talk, there’s a lot of sort of short little stories. [RTH: Right.] Um.. Was I listening to it? Was it in my consciousness? I mean, I think the two, two things I noted down were the radio and the toast, um, y’know, and there was more around me. Um, so I guess I was listening to it.
- 39:19 RTH: Okay. So I’m, I’m willing to leave it at that. [Olivia: Okay.] We, we are, we are in the process today of trying to explore this deal about whether your consciousness ends abruptly and I’m only seeing one thing, or whether it sort of tapers off into the weeds. [Olivia: Yeah.] And, and I, I would say we probably haven’t, and, and we’re not going to sort that through today. I think it probably is gonna take us another day or two to figure that out. [Olivia: Um hmm.] So shall we go to number one, which would be yesterday?
- 39:19 Russ comments: To recapitulate this interview, we started with Olivia’s observation that this sample was uninteresting, and ended with the understanding that the sample was a visual sensory awareness. Recall that on day 2, we skipped a sample (sample 2.3, 36:38) that Olivia said that she had “just opened this website and I was looking at the word at the top left of the website... It feels like it was just an input-y one that’s not that interesting.” That was day 2, and we accepted the request to skip that sample (see the comment in day 2 at 37:02). Now it seems fairly likely that sample 2.3 was a visual sensory awareness. There is no way to know that for sure,

SAMPLE 4.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE (doubling back to yesterday’s samples)

- 39:49 Olivia: Yep. So I’ve written down some like phonetic renderings of the sort of da, da, da, but there, so three notes. Um, so I’m currently producing a show. I was, the theme song of this show, I, um, the first three notes of that theme song were, were what was in my consciousness. Strangely enough, I can’t recreate them now, even. And it’s interesting cuz this is a song that I’ve listened to three or four times in the past two days, but not before that. So this is a new song that this sound engineer created for the, for the trailer of the show. Um, so I’ve listened to it quite intently. It’s been introduced to me as a piece of music. Um, but weirdly I can’t reproduce it. [RTH: Okay.] But yes, uh, not even

the entirety of that song, just these sort of three notes, once again on a loop. And this is what I keep finding these little slices of music on rotation, on loop in my head.

Um, so I've also written that I was at the moment of the beep try, scrambling around on my desk, trying to find headphones to make a call. Um, and I was aware of the, so I had just made, so I have, like, I had just made a decision. I have my wireless AirPods. Um, and my, I have these wired headphones on my desk at the moment because my AirPods stopped working after I took a run in the rain, and I, they were not working well for calls. So I had just made the decision I had sort of my, I had initially reached for my AirPods and then realized *I'm making a call. I'm going to actually use these wired ones*. And I had, so I've said that I just made that decision cuz that, that was what had inspired the scrambling around, which was what I was doing when the beep happened. Um, I guess it feels like there were ripples of the headphone decision in my consciousness. [RTH: So the...] and then this loop background three notes.

42:04 RTH: Okay. So is it true that the, the loop, the loop is the most central thing in your experience?

42:11 Olivia: Yes. Yep.

42:12 RTH: And by a lot 60-40, 90-10?

42:15 Olivia: I'd say yeah. 60-40, 70-30. [RTH: Okay.] I mean, and there's obviously I've, I'm, I must be thinking about who I'm calling and why and what I'm gonna say, and it's a work call, y'know? So, um, but at that moment, that's what it was. The song.

42:15 Russ comments: This turn may give some insight into how the iterative process / co-investigator role progresses. Here Olivia states a presupposition that has lurked behind many of her previous samples ("I *must be* thinking about who I'm calling and why and what I'm gonna say"), but then she rejects that ("But at that moment, that's what it was. The song.") This is *not* RTH trying to talk Olivia out of her skilled-activity presupposition. Instead, it is Olivia, taking on the role of investigator, recognizing that *here, in this new sample*, she is engaged in skilled activity but even so concluding that the only thing in her direct experience was the song.

42:35 RTH: Okay. And this is, this is a loop in the sense that da, da da is happening and then da, da da is happening again and then da, da, da is happening again. [Olivia: Yes.] And was that true in the first beep that we talked about today too? The guy [Olivia: Yeah.] The, I didn't realize that was...

42:47 Olivia: Yeah. And maybe not, maybe not a continuous loop, like it ends and it starts autom, straight away. But it ends. And then within a couple of sec, seconds, it starts again.

42:55 RTH: That's, that's about the, the country guy?

42:58 Olivia: Yeah. *And* this one as well.

42:59 RTH: And this one as well. [Olivia: Yep.] So I'm hearing it repetitively, but not necessarily back to tail or tail to front or, or whatever. Not... [Olivia: Yeah.] Okay. Alright. And, and this,

and this is a *heard*, I *hear* these three notes? [Olivia: (nods affirmatively) Um hmm.] And do I hear them the way they were, were presented to me? Like I hear the record, like a, like a recording?

43:24 Olivia: Yep. I hear like a recording. I don't hear my, y'know, like me singing them. I hear a recording of that.

43:29 RTH: And is this, and are these three notes an orchestra or a...

43:33 Olivia: No, they're kind of like a synthesized...

43:36 RTH: And are they three single notes? Or three chords? Or...

43:40 Olivia: No. Three single notes.

43:41 RTH: So I hear the three single notes the same way as they were originally synthesized, as far as my experience is concerned. [Olivia: Yes.] Maybe they're wrong, but I, but I, I hear them as if, as if I was hearing the right thing. [Olivia: Yeah.] And in this case, is there any question that this is a *hearing* phenomenon? [Olivia: No.] We had a little debate about, we had a little debate about that in the first, our first conversation, but this one is quite clearly, I *hear* these things.

44:07 Olivia: Well, no, but it's the same. We can have the same debate, but we probably, let's not! But [RTH: Okay!] It's the same feeling, that it's heard, but not in the same way that I'm hearing you [RTH: Okay.] because it's heard from an internal rather than an external place.

44:23 RTH: And is that the same way as in the country guy? Or is it [Olivia: Yeah.] So when you said the country guy was reality was turned down, the da da da is turned down in the same way? [Olivia: Yeah.] To the same extent?

44:38 Olivia: Yeah. Yeah. I feel like I, there's a, there's a volume and a place [points to the right and behind her] that my internal music is, and it's the same every time.

44:47 RTH: Okay. So I there's, no doubt, I totally understand, that you could tell the difference between an external sound and an internal sound. And is that what you mean by the reality is turned down? [Olivia: Yeah.] Or is it ...

45:00 Olivia: Yeah. Yeah.

45:01 RTH: Okay. Okay. And I'm looking for my headphones and I'm gathering, I'm understanding that to be sort of a behavioral thing. I'm doin' it. I'm lookin'.

45:17 Olivia: Yeah. I mean, I'm literally with my hands, there's a mess of stuff here and I'm trying to ex extract them from that mess of stuff.

45:29 RTH: Okay. And I'm not *thinking* about it. I'm not thinking *where are my earphones* or whatever, as far as I know, I'm just...

45:33 Olivia: No, I'm not thinking the words "where my earphones." I mean, I'm skillfully looking for my earphones without thinking *quick, hurry up and find my earphones* in a way that may be different if someone was calling *me*, but I was going to make that call.

45:48 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm good. Let's take number 2.

SAMPLE 4.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

45:53 Olivia: Okay. Um, so once again, there's a background soundtrack. And it's a different song, but from the same little trailer of this show that I've produced. Um, so there was a theme song and then later on we have another song that's like this sort of lullaby sort of song. Um, so at, I've written down "Reading a notification on my phone with the background soundtrack." Um, so I, yeah, I think I, I can't remember what the notification was, but something had pierced into my consciousness in the way that notifications on your phone do. Um, and I was absorbing that. Um, and once again, this lullaby song is, um, and, and, and just a small part of it was, was playing.

46:41 RTH: And is it playing in a same way or the different way than the da, da, da,

46:46 Olivia: Uh, uh, in the same, like in the same way. Like, as I said, I've, I was noticing these past 48 hours that there was a lot of music. Um, it was always a small chunk of music. It was always a sort of loop of music. It was always, it always feels like it's coming from the same place [points to the back right of her head] and in the same sort of volume, but it's different music.

47:05 RTH: Okay. And at the same time I'm reading. And that, is that in, in the, well, you tell me what, which is more prominent, the music or the reading? Or doesn't that question make sense?

47:22 Olivia: Uh, no, the question makes sense. And I feel like maybe they're 50, 50 in the way the, it, um, I mean, the song had certainly already been there because, as I said, it was on repeat. Um, but y'know, it was quite like, I do find that when I have this music stuck in my head, it's quite prominent in my consciousness. [RTH: Okay.] Um, but y'know, I had picked up the phone and was reading words on the phone. Now I can't remember what they were, but I was certainly paying attention to that.

48:00 RTH: Okay. Alright. Then I think I'm good. And, and I think this is a good place for me to say, I, I gotta get onto my next deal. [Olivia: Yeah.] So can we communicate by email about what we're gonna do, what we're gonna do next? [Olivia: That's fine.] I, I'm in favor, I'm in favor of doing this again. [Olivia: Okay.] And, uh, and, uh, and we'll, I'll, I'll email you when I've got a few more minutes and, uh, we'll figure out when we're gonna do it. And you're gonna, you'll look at the website and see whether we can do what we can do about that.

48:28 Olivia: Yep. And I'll send you these 15 minutes of audio if they are useful, but....

48:33 RTH: Great. Yeah.

48:34 Olivia: Alright. Great. Thanks very much, Russell.

48:36 RTH: Thanks Olivia. I will see you anon.

48:38 Olivia: Okay. Bye-bye.

48:39 RTH: See you.