

TRANSCRIPT WITH COMMENTARY

Tristan

Tristan Interview –1: Tristan and Russ meet for the first time

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the January 6 initial interview with Tristan that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/DeVEQnTGI10>. 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

Tristan = Tristan

0:00 RTH: So, I've spent a fair amount of time with your brother. [Tristan: Yes.] I haven't, haven't met, haven't met you before.

0:00 Russ comments: Tristan's brother is Julian Bass-Krueger, who is a co-interviewer with me in Parts X (https://hurlburt.faculty.unlv.edu/ieo/mel/mel_sampling.html) and XI (https://hurlburt.faculty.unlv.edu/ieo/kerry/kerry_sampling.html) in this video series. Julian had read some of my previous writings and had attempted to try performing DES interviews on his own, including with his brother Tristan. As becomes clear in Part X, I thought that Julian's understanding and application of DES had been substantially mistaken. It was at the request of Julian that the present interview takes place.

0:10 Tristan: I know. [RTH: Nice to meet you.] Um, yeah. So I am a, I'm a PhD student in, in Rochester, University of Rochester, studying film, mostly. Visual studies.

0:23 RTH: Should be interesting.

0:24 Tristan: Mm-hmm.

0:26 RTH: And how long have you been doing that?

0:29 Tristan: Um, this is my second year that I'm in the middle of.

0:35 RTH: Okay. And, and what you know about DES here and what we're, what we're doing here, what's the,

0:45 Tristan: Well, as I mentioned, I read *A Passion for Specificity*, which I really loved. Um, me and Julian have had lots of talks about it, a lot of disagreements as well[laughs]. Um, he actually, he actually tried to do it with me, um, a while back. He did sort of, I didn't have an earpiece, but my cell phone would buzz. And then we talk a little bit about those buzzes at the end of the day. Um, so Julian and I have had disagreements about what DES can do and what it can do for me, but I think I am a little more on, on your side of the matter regarding it. So I saw your email to him where you said, well, Julian really thinks it, it should be used as a therapeutic tool for me, that it'll, it'll cure all my

problems. And we have, we've had discussions about that. So, um, I would basically... So, so I, I'd say I'm more doing it out of curiosity, not just because Julian wants me to, um, I'm curious for myself. I think it's a great method. Um, I've had a lot of frustrations with my Freudian psychoanalyst, and I feel like DES is much more my speed than the kind of looking into introspection in the mind that psychoanalysis does. Um, yeah.

0:45 Russ comments: The book Tristan refers to is Caracciolo, M., & Hurlburt, R. T. (2016). *A passion for specificity: Confronting inner experience in literature and science*. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press.

2:14 RTH: And so you've been doing psychoanalysis, ortho, more or less orthodox psychoanalysis for a while, is that right?

2:20 Tristan: Right. Yeah. I know that's pretty rare these days, but y'know I lie on the couch and everything, and she is, um, I don't know if she's strictly Freudian, but she takes a lot from Freud and even some Lacanian stuff and some Winnicott. And so yeah, that school of psychoanalysis,

2:41 RTH: That'll be an interesting thing to do.

2:43 Tristan: Yeah. I, I mean, I find it interesting. I find it generative. I find, I find some of the interpretations useful. I find some of them a little bunk and unhelpful. I find it a, a little, it sort of turns my thought. It sort of like latches onto the areas of what I'm thinking that can sort of be applied to this existing structure, which is, y'know, what Freud looks at. And, and I find it a lot of times unsatisfying into getting into the details of what exactly my, my thought is, and looking at, again, the specificity of it. So those are things that I would, I, I think I, I, I appreciate the DES method for just being, for saying, *okay, what are your thoughts at this given moment?*

3:31 RTH: So I think that is basically what DES is about, not, as long as we're using *thoughts* in a pretty broad term—broad, broad sense: What is your experience, whatever that might be, at the moment of the beep. So if we were to work together, I would say I would be doing it (a) because I told Julian and I would do it, and, uh, [Tristan laughs], uh, and (b) because it, uh, I am putting a collection of these serieses of interviews on the web, as, as you probably know, you. Have you browsed through my website of...?

4:10 Tristan: Um, I've seen some of the recordings he's done with some of the other, I mean, I, I don't think I've watched the full ones, but he is talked about them and I've, I've seen some little clips of them with some of the other subjects (or you call 'em subjects, or?)

4:27 RTH: I generally call them participants because the APA forces me to call them participants.

4:32 Tristan: Okay.

4:32 RTH: Subjects is probably a better term, but don't, don't really want to get into the fight with APA about it, so I call the participants,

4:41 Tristan: Um,

CONSIDERATIONS OF PRIVACY

4:42 RTH: The, so at, so at any rate, what I would say is that if we were to engage in this kind of an endeavor, I would, I would say there would at least be the *possibility* that we would wanna put those onto the web. And, and we wouldn't do that until *you* thought that was a good idea. And *I* thought it was a good idea. And we both, we both together thought it was a good idea each individually and both together. But, but that should be, y'know, we should think of it as, as at least a *possibility* that somewhere down the road we might wanna...

5:17 Tristan: Yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm open to that. Um, so I know, um, yeah. I'm generally open to putting everything online. Um, I know you talk about how people can redact certain of their thoughts in DES. [RTH: Right.] They don't wanna tell them to you, they just say, I don't wanna tell you that. [RTH: Right.] Um, so would there be the possibility of, of, y'know, redacting parts of the recording and just saying, *I'll tell you, but I don't want to rec record this?* Yes. Or I don't wanna,

5:46 RTH: Yes. So I think, I think the, I, I think inner experience is by nature *entirely private*. It belongs to you. It doesn't belong to anybody else. It doesn't belong to me, doesn't belong to the internet world until such time as you think it's a good idea for somebody else to have a look at it. And so, yes, you should have as much control over that as, as you would like to have. So at the, at the moment of describing an experience, you can say, *I don't wanna talk about this*. Or after we have recorded something, you could say, or, or, so that would be the, the first level. I don't wanna talk about it at all. The second would be, I'm happy to talk about it, but I don't wanna record it. And the third level would be *we've recorded it, and now that I see what I've said or what, now that I have a chance to reflect on what it is that I have said, I don't think it should be out there*. And so we can erase it at that point.

6:41 Tristan: Right.

6:43 RTH: Or, and the, and the fourth level would be, *now that I'm engaged in this entire procedure, I don't think it was a good idea for me to have any of it out there*. That would be, that would be a part of the deal, part of the agreement as well. So the, the agreement would, the agreement would basically be, you would have control at whatever level you thought was appropriate, which might be fine. I you can do the whole thing, whatever, or it might be nothing, or it might be somewhere in between.

7:18 Tristan: Hmm. Yeah, that sounds, that sounds good to me. I mean, there are certain types of thoughts that I have that I would probably wanna redact. Um, and curious to see how, how much of that we, we pick up, um, in the moment. Okay. I, I wouldn't say it's a, it's a, y'know, I, I, I think there'll still be plenty of material that that's post-able.

7:43 RTH: I don't have any, any way of knowing any of that. So [laughs]. But, but what I, what I do think is, I, I think we shouldn't require you to make a determination about that *now*, I think.

7:58 Tristan: Right, right.

7:58 RTH: I'm not a believer in things like consent forms or whatever, because I think, I think you don't, you don't have a way of knowing what's gonna happen and how you should consent to that is not a, not a good idea. So. Right. I, I think consent from my point of view, ought to be a sort of a living document and revocable and updateable and consider-able consider, consideration-able, whatever, however you want to put that. Basically two adult people coming together and saying, *well, I think this is how it ought to be*. And we can talk about it and debate it and discuss it and whatever. But ulti, ulti, ultimately you would have 51% of the vote of, of anything made public about this procedure.

8:55 Tristan: Okay. Yeah. Sounds good.

9:00 RTH: And then the, the other thing that would be of, of value to me, it would be, I have a graduate student and a graduate student would profit from interview practice. So that I would envision this as being sort of a tag-team, joint interviews between her, her name is Amber, and me and you. And we would together be asking the questions and she would've the same privacy constraints on her that I would have.

9:32 Tristan: Yeah. I'm happy for her to, to, yeah, to participate...

9:37 RTH: Or not. I think, I, I think in general, it doesn't particularly matter. Cuz I'm going, I'm gonna be there and, uh, and I'm going to be trying to make sure that the questions get asked the way I think they ought to be asked that. But, y'know, there's advantage in having different points of view, and she would have a different point of view.

9:55 Tristan: Right.

9:56 RTH: So I haven't talked to her about it. So we'll have to, I will talk to her and she said, she might say, well, I don't wanna have anything to do with it or whatever. We can figure that out and go forwards.

10:07 Tristan: Okay. Sounds good.

10:11 RTH: And assuming that we're gonna agree to do this, when, when did you have in mind what, uh, do you have a timeframe?

10:17 Tristan: Well, you do, you do daily interviews, right? Or

10:25 RTH: Depends on the person? Depends on the situation. Sometimes they're daily, sometimes they're weekly, sometimes they're twice a week.

- 10:33 Tristan: Um, well, what were you, what were your expectations and hope for this one? Or do we [RTH: I don't have...] it's, it's up to me. Um, well, I have pretty wide-open availability right now, so as soon as possible to start, I don't, y'know, um, pretty soon, um, courses are gonna start up again for me, so I'll be busier, of course. But I, I feel like I can maybe do at least most days, um, let me see. Maybe, maybe, mm, maybe Tuesdays and Wednesdays would be a little harder for me. So all the other days can be daily, I guess.
- 11:34 RTH: Okay. Well, there's the issue of the beeper. I would have to get you a beeper or we could try using an iPhone as a beeper. I'm not, I don't... That would be faster, but not quite as good.
- 11:59 Tristan: Hmm.
- 12:01 RTH: iPhone systems have changed or whatever.
- 12:03 Tristan: I'm willing to try the beeper. So it's, it's held, it's like a earbud, right? Or does it go over the ear
- 12:14 RTH: It has a clip that goes over the, over the ear
- 12:16 Tristan: Has a clip that goes over. Okay.
- 12:18 RTH: Like, look, it's, it's, it is, it is like, and it actually is a sort of an, the oldest of fashioned, the old-fashioned earphone. You can imagine an earphone from the 1960s or 50s or whatever.
- 12:30 Tristan: Right. And does that allow sound to fully penetrate [RTH: Yeah.] in that. Okay, cool. Um, okay. Yeah, I, I, I am willing to try the beeper route.
- 12:44 RTH: Okay. So what I would say is you're in Rochester. So this is, and this is Monday. It's gonna take half a week or so to get to you a beeper.
- 12:59 Tristan: Right.
- 13:00 RTH: So we could think about next week.

[They compare calendars]

- 13:30 RTH maybe what we really need to do is to wait until you get the beeper, see how, how long it takes it actually to get there now.
- 13:32 Tristan: Right, right. Sounds reasonable. And

SKETCH OF THE PROCEDURE

- 13:35 RTH: When you get the beeper, then you should let me know, and then we'll figure out... The first meeting will be a relatively short meeting where I'll describe how to use the

beeper. And then after that, the, the, the deal would be that you would wear the beeper for about three hours at a time, get a half a dozen beeps.

13:54 Tristan: Mm-hmm

13:54 RTH: And it generally takes, I'll, I'll set the beeper to give a beep on the average every half an hour, but it's a random beeper and it makes up its own mind.

14:03 Tristan: Right.

14:03 RTH: So it could be longer than three hours, little shorter than three hours, depending on whether the beeper decides to give you long intervals or short intervals. But the object is to get about six beeps and then to, for us to have a conversation about those beeps for you to jot down notes about each beep when it, when it occurs. I'll send you a notebook as about that as well, for that. And then for us to talk about each one of those beeps within 24 hours of the time that you sample.

14:38 Tristan: Right.

14:41 RTH: And then at the end of the first interview like that, then we'll decide whether we wanna do it again and proceed from there.

14:30 Tristan: Okay. Sounds good.

14:55 RTH: *And* I would say it might be a good idea for you to, if you haven't already somewhere, jot down some notes about what you think your experience is like. But I don't really, I don't particularly wanna *see* those notes. I don't particularly care. And I, and I will be trying to talk you out of any presuppositions that you might have about that. So whatever it is that you write down would be not expected *to* find it, not expected *not to* find it, but to be neutral about that. And so I'm, I *wouldn't* want you to spend much care or time about writing those things down, just [Tristan: Hmm.] jot down what you think, so that six weeks from now, or six months from now, or six years from now, you can remember what you thought and

15:42 Tristan: Right, right.

15:46 Tristan: How much in your speech and not, and

15:49 RTH: Yeah, if you've been doing the psychoanalysis thing for a while, you probably have a pretty good idea what the,

15:54 Tristan: Well [laughs] Well, who knows about that?

16:01 RTH: I don't either. So anything else that we should be talking about today?

16:10 Tristan: Um, uh, not so much on my end. I, I take it you mostly wanna learn about people through, through their thoughts. So

RTH DESCRIBES THE OVERALL AIM, and TRISTAN DESCRIBES HIS GENERAL EXPERIENCE

- 16:21 RTH: I mean, so I would say when my goal in these projects are, I would, I would say I think people are different from each other, and I think they're different from each other in ways that (a) they don't know themselves very frequently, and (b) that the, that the consciousness science (to the extent that there is such a thing) doesn't know about it. And, uh, so my goal and, and that collection that I am making is basically to make it evident what the differences are and what the characteristics of the interviews are, what you have to, what do you have to do to find out about those differences.
- 17:06 Tristan: Right. I, I remember reading *A Passion for Specificity*. You talked about, um, uh, there, there was some, there was some, uh, subject you had who, um, who would like black out from rage or something. And like you described his situation in sort of broader strokes. Do you care about knowing what people's broad strokes, self-diagnoses problems are before doing the interviews? Or do you, is that something you just wanna learn as, as we go? Because I could, I could fill you in on, on the, the things that I believe I experience, or the, the, y'know, the certain pains that I have been diagnosed or self-diagnosed with, et cetera. But if you'd rather just learn about that through the beeps.
- 17:59 RTH: So that would, so, so I guess the, the, there would be a choice to be made here. I, that was sort of the kind of thing that I had in mind when I suggested you jot it down. But maybe it would be better for you just to tell me. I am, I, myself I *think* am pretty good at forgetting most everything that people tell me [Tristan laughs] and are not, not really forgetting it, but what I call *bracketing* it. I, I, I'm interested in it when it, they tell me what, this is a general characteristic, but I've been around the block often enough to *know* that some people's general characteristic characterizations of themselves are quite accurate and other people's are quite in, *inaccurate*. And, and it's interesting in the sort of a *post hoc* way that makes sense, sense of that. So if you'd like to tell me now, that'd be fine. Or if you'd like to jot it down, that'd be fine too. Either way it returns you. Um,
- 18:54 Tristan: Well, one thing Julian did when he, when he did my beeps is I, I, so I have these chronic pain conditions. I have a constant headache and, uh, it's since developed and now I have constant pain throughout my whole body. And so when he did the, um, beeps with me, a lot of my thoughts weren't about my pain specifically. Um, and then, and then he pointed out to me, he's like, *oh, well a lot of your thoughts weren't about pain. That must mean you, you weren't actually feeling that pain at that moment.* And then I said, *well, no, that was an error in the way you posed the questions.* Because since I feel the pain all the time, I didn't make specific note of it at that moment to you, which didn't mean I didn't [inaudible] it. So, um, I know if I'll, if I'll do the, the beeps with you, I'll, I'll make sure to try to be a little more thorough in what I include and what I don't include. But that was, um, that's one thing I'm sort of curious about in this is how, and, and maybe I won't have a thought about pain at that specific moment, or maybe I won't have a bodily feeling about pain at the moment of the beep in which I'll try not to be, I'll try not to insert it after the fact. But, um, that's one thing...

- 20:13 RTH: That, so, so that, that, that's a pretty good statement of what makes the method interesting and difficult at the same time, is what I understand you to be saying is that you have an interest in pain and or belief in pain or whatever. And the que, and the object of the *method* is to what I would call *bracket* the interest, [Tristan: Hmm.] which is to say it doesn't mean that I think that the interest is *not* correct or that I think the interest *is* correct. What I *would* invite us to do is, as you put it, *not insert* pain, just because you are self-concept or self-theory or general, general characterization, whatever you wanna call that has pain being as a, as a frequent thing. If it *is* a frequent thing, we'll find it. If it's not a frequent thing, then we won't find it. And if it's somewhere in between them, maybe we'll find that too.
- 21:15 Tristan: Now, another thing I'm curious about is the, the types of mind body distinctions you make in this, because I don't know if I know what, what separates thought from, from bodily feeling. Um, so I, I presume that's something will work through in detail later.
- 21:35 RTH: I think, I think that's exactly what we'll work through. Yeah. And I would say, I, I, I think, I think I think one *has to* work through those things, and I think one has to work through those things in the context of individual beeps. So I don't think it's very fruitful, I guess maybe you could say, I do not think it would be fruitful for us to try to figure out, well, exactly what is the distinction between thoughts and bodily feelings or whatever. We can, [Tristan: Right.] that is, I think, uh, an impossible conversation to have in the abstract. [Tristan: Right.] What I think we *can* have is I kind of, when, when the beep occurs, I think we *can* learn how to talk about a beep, talk about it, the experience that was ongoing at the moment of the beep in ways that you will find rests lightly on your experience (whether that's on a thought or on a bodily feeling or whatever) and I will think happens, put in, put into communication (usually using words, but it could be pictures or gestures or whatever) and, uh, so I know what it is that we're talking about.
- 22:57 Tristan: Okay.
- 22:58 RTH: That's, that's the object. And which is *not* to discount that, that there is a difference between bodily feelings and, and thoughts. It's just that I don't think we can, I don't, I don't think it's possible to figure those things out without tying them, time after time after time after time, to actual experiences. By the time we're *done* with it, we might very well have a, a very clear distinction between what *Tristan* means and what *Tristan and Russ* mean when they call this a *thought* and that a *bodily feeling* or whatever.
- 23:37 Tristan: Right.
- 23:38 RTH: But, but I would much rather have that emerge rather than have a way of expecting that it could drive the discussion.
- 23:49 Tristan: Okay. Cool.
- 23:51 RTH: Um, it's, it's a DES is a patient method. It's a, it's a, it's a, we expect not to be very good at this on the first day and maybe not even very good at that on the second day

or the third day because we have to figure out what we're talking about and how we're gonna do it. It,

24:09 Tristan: I'm looking forward to it.

24:12 RTH: All right. Then what I would say is that when we're done here, you should email me your address that I should send a beeper to, and I will talk to Amber and see whether she's interested. And then I'll send you a beeper. And then next week when the beeper arrives, when the, *when* the beeper arrives, you let me know when that the beeper has arrived. And then we'll schedule a time to... The first time would be to explain how the beeper works, and then, then, and that time we'll schedule *another* time as to when we'll actually wear the beeper.

24:49 Tristan: Okay. Sounds good.

24:55 RTH: Sound like a plan.

24:56 Tristan: Sounds like a plan.

24:58 RTH: All right. Sounds good to me. You send me a, an address, I'll send you a beeper.

25:03 Tristan: Okay, cool. Thanks.

25:06 RTH: Alrighty. And if you got questions in the meantime, will y'know how to find me and uh

25:11 Tristan: Gotcha. Gotcha. Thanks Russ. Talk soon. Bye.