

TRANSCRIPT WITH COMMENTARY

Tristan

Tristan Interview 9

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the March 17th interview with Tristan that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/Bu7DaEYJeME>. 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

AG = Amber Goto

Tristan = Tristan

- 0:06 RTH: So I had a writing implement here a minute ago, must've disappeared. Oh, I should get organized. So anything we should be talking about before we look at beeps today?
- 0:38 Tristan: Um, no, not really. Sorry I had to miss, I had to cancel on Friday. Thanks for rescheduling.
- 0:46 RTH: And so, are the beeps from today? From today? Or from yesterday or when?
- 0:51 Tristan: Uh, these are from this morning.
- 0:52 RTH: These are from this morning. And this is gonna be Tristan 9. And can you hear me adequately? And we all, we all good as far as that's concerned?
- 1:04 Tristan: Yup.
- 1:06 RTH: Alright, then I'm ready. Let's go look at beep number 1.

SAMPLE 9.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

- 1:09 Tristan: Okay. Beep number 1. I am feeling stomach pain. Um, I am conscious of listening to a podcast. And I am having an array of anxious thoughts. Um, and, uh, let me see. My anxious thoughts are not directly in words, but they're something along the lines of that, um, *I'm anxious that I may not have anything interesting to share if, if the beeper beeps; or what if it's embarrassing because I might have to poop again? Or what if, um, or how would I talk about my listening to this podcast if it were to beep? Stuff like that.*
- 2:25 RTH: So all related to the sampling process.
- 2:28 Tristan: Right.

2:33 RTH: Okay. And is that it? Those three things. Pain, podcast, anxious thoughts? Is that the end, end of the opening salvo?

2:44 Tristan: Yeah that's it. That, that's it.

2:46 RTH: Okay. And is any of those more prominent than any of the others? [Tristan's screen freezes.] So I think, Tristan, you are frozen, Is he frozen for you too, Amber? [she nods] It's apparently...

Russ comments: They pause the recording; Tristan leaves and rejoins.

3:46 So, we are good now you were frozen. And I would, and I had just asked, is anyone of these more prominent than the other? And I, and you froze at that time. And it looks like you're frozen again.

4:03 Tristan: Uh, am I back?

4:04 RTH: Oh, yes, now you're back.

4:05 Tristan: Okay, okay. Hopefully this is better. I changed something, so.

4:12 RTH: Okay. Is any one of those more prominent than the others?

4:16 Tristan: I would say the anxious thoughts are slightly more prominent and the others are equal.

4:22 RTH: So 40-30-30 or something like that? 50, 50-25-25?

4:26 Tristan: Yeah 40-30-30 sounds good.

4:28 RTH: Okay. Well let's start at the thoughts. So this is a, a variety of anxious thoughts, which I think I understand the, the're all concerns about what I might say if the beeper beeped?

4:41 Tristan: Right

4:42 RTH: Is that, is that right?

4:43 Tristan: Yeah.

4:44 RTH: And do they seem like a, a bunch of simultaneous thoughts, several independent, but simultaneous thoughts or does it seem like one cloud of thoughts that I could say, I could look at it from this perspective and get...

5:04 Tristan: Now, there does seem to be a succession, so I think I maybe thought one more prominently. Um, but I think def, at the time of the beep, I feel like I'm thinking about multiple possibilities that could go wrong. So it definitely seems like I have, um, multiple.... So for example, I, the anxiety around my stomach and using the restroom

and the anxiety around having something interesting to say if I'm just listening to the podcast seems simultaneous.

5:49 RTH: Simultaneous and independent ,or at least separable. Is that right?

5:55 Tristan: Yeah, because maybe there, there may be separate scenarios, but it's kind of like two parts of the same thing.

6:04 RTH: Okay. So when I'm, when I'm, when I'm trying to tease apart and make sure I understand it is like, like I, I got a pen and I could say, well, the pen is red and I could also say the pen is long and I could also say the pen is vertical. And that would all be about the same pen, but it would be three separate thoughts. One is color, one is shape, one is directionality or something. So the question is, are these, do these all seem about the same basic anxiety, ba, basic about what to say if the beep, beeper beeped, but separable, separable thoughts about it?

6:46 Tristan: Yeah, they seem somewhat separable.

6:48 RTH: Okay.

6:49 Tristan: Um,

6:52 RTH: And at the moment of the beep, does it seem like there's two of them and maybe the others were sorta close by, but previous? Or does it seem like, does it seem like a sorta swirl and all these things are overlapping and maybe they're all simultaneous, but somewhere from,

7:08 Tristan: It seems like an overlapping, but one of them may have been introduced later.

7:16 RTH: So does that mean that, does that mean like one thought might have come and be gone and, and another one come and gone and another one at the same time and another one at the same time but lasts longer? [While speaking he holds up a paper and draws a schematic something like the one at right.]



7:40 Tristan: Yeah, that seems likely.

7:41 RTH: Is that, is that sorta the way this, this seems to be?

7:44 Tristan: Yeah.

7:45 RTH: Okay. And so I think I'm good about the, that portion. Well, I guess I, I'm not, I'm not quite good about that yet. So these are anxious thoughts, I understand. And is there a

feeling of anxiety that seems separable from the thoughts? I'm not exactly sure how to ask that, but... Or does it seem like these thoughts themselves, this bundle of thoughts is the anxiety itself?

8:22 Tristan: Um, well, comparing to past samples, I would, that the anxiety seems more clearly linked to the thoughts. So I would just say they're an, anxious thoughts.

8:39 RTH: So I have a bunch of anxious thoughts that together I can say, well, I was feeling anxious.

8:44 Tristan: Yeah.

8:44 RTH: Rather than saying, well, I was feeling anxious, and I could say, well, I was thinking this, I was thinking that I was thinking this other.

8:51 Tristan: Yeah.

8:55 RTH: Okay. Amber, you got any more questions about that aspect?

8:58 AG: No.

8:58 RTH: Alright, then let's go to the podcast. So am I listening to the podcast? Or am I.... What you said was, "I was conscious of listening to my, of listening to the podcast," and that locution at any rate is a little bit meta. It's like there's the listening to the podcast and then there's the noticing [Tristan: Mm.] that I'm listening to the podcast. Do you mean that in a, in a I'm-observing-myself-listening way? [Tristan: Mm.] That's what we call, we call meta. Or do you mean well, I'm just listening to the podcast? I'm carried, I'm carried along by the podcast.

8:58 Russ comments: At 1:09, in his opening salvo, Tristan had said "I am conscious of listening to a podcast." The question that RTH is asking here is whether that *conscious of* is aimed at the podcast, in which case his consciousness is aimed *away* from Tristan; or is his *conscious of* aimed at the *listening to*, in which case it is aimed *toward* Tristan as the doer of the listening. If his consciousness is aimed at himself doing the listing, we call that a *meta* experience. Grammatically speaking, his opening salvo was meta. Whether he intended to be describing a meta experience is what is at question here.

9:36 Tristan: Well, I would say that I am listening to the podcast without much comprehension. And since one of my anxious thoughts was about, was about what would happen if a beep came and I had to describe my listening of the podcast, I would say that that is a sort of meta thought. Um, and as a matter of fact, I'm sort of like hearing, hearing all the, the words. So I'm, I'm hearing a lot of words and speaking, I guess.

9:36 Russ comments: So there are actually two different kinds of meta experience being discussed here: (1) the meta-experience of observing Tristan's listening to the podcast; and (2) the meta-experience of observing Tristan's participation in the DES study.

- 10:22 RTH: So I am hearing words and speaking without comprehension? With minimal comprehension, with no comprehension, with full comprehension?
- 10:32 Tristan: Minimal, let's say minimal.
- 10:35 RTH: So it's not like, it is not like it's *totally* meaningless, but I'm not really tracking it closely, either?
- 10:41 Tristan: Yeah.
- 10:42 RTH: Okay. And, and I am *noticing* to some degree that that process is happening. Apparently I am, [Tristan: Yeah.] I am, I am in fact meta noticing that I am not fully attending to this con?
- 10:42 Russ comments: It appears that *both* type (1) *and* type (2) meta experience is ongoing at this beep. (See comment at 9:36.)
- 11:00 Tristan: Yeah.
- 11:02 RTH: Okay. [pause] And, and you said, I think I something like "I heard the words of the podcast." And does that, does that mean that I hear like a stream of words or does it mean like, I hear what the guy's saying? He's obviously speaking in words and the distinction that I'm trying to make here is between do I hear a word and then another word and then another word. And these are strung along like beads, but each one I'm like, pearls on a necklace or something. I'm paying attention to this pearl and, and (or *mildly* paying attention, *slightly* paying attention to this pearl and then this pearl and then this pearl. Or does it seem like I am, I'm hearing the guy speaking and, and not paying much attention to it.
- 11:02 Russ comments: Tristan had said at 9:36, "Um, and as a matter of fact, I'm sort of like hearing, hearing all the, the words. So I'm, I'm hearing a lot of words and speaking, I guess." That focus on the words is a mildly unusual description, to my ear; it would have been more usual to have said something like "I'm hearing the podcast, the guy speaking, but not really paying much attention." Tristan's mention of "hearing the *words*" is what has drawn RTH's 11:02 questioning.
- 11:59 Tristan: Um, um, [pause]
- 12:14 RTH: So in my metaphor it's like, do I see this woman wearing a pearl and then another pearl and then another pearl? Or do I see her wearing a necklace?
- 12:23 Tristan: That's the, I think I'm kinda taking all the words in together, y'know. Um, it's hard to discern for me at this point, but, um, I'm not really listening word by word by word, even though I kinda hear a succession of words, but it's kind of feels like I'm hearing wor, a lot of words. I dunno. [RTH: So.] it's maybe this, maybe this is not quite answerable for me.

- 12:23 Russ comments (see the comment at 11:02): Tristan's 12:23 turn still focuses more on the words (e.g., "I kinda hear a succession of words") than I think is usual. Perhaps that is Tristan being pedantically theoretical—of course a meaningful sentence is a succession of words. But perhaps his experience is more word—word—word than is usual. I don't know, and I suspect that Tristan doesn't know, either. I will file that away—perhaps it will appear in later day sampling, in which case our conversation here may pave the way for a clearer apprehension (that is the heart of the iterative process).
- 12:52 RTH: It might not be answerable for you and it might not be answerable for *anybody*, but I think it is answerable for some people anyway. So what I'm, so the distinction I'm trying to get, trying to get to is it, does it seem like I'm hearing a meaningful stream coming at me? Even though I'm not paying attention to it very closely, but if it seems like a meaningful stream. *Or* does it seem like I'm hearing a word followed by a word, followed by a word, followed by a word?
- 13:29 Tristan: Um.
- 13:29 RTH: And may and if that's...
- 13:30 Tristan: I would say, I would say it feels like a meaningful stream that I'm not paying a, an extremely close amount of attention to.
- 13:30 Russ comments: Tristan comes down on the side of the meaningful stream, not the word—word—word. The interview has warrant for a mild amount of skepticism in this regard. Perhaps we will iron out that skepticism (one way or the other) at some later date (which will be the iterative process at work).
- This kind of honest skepticism should *not* be taken as a criticism of Tristan; in fact, I think it conveys the highest honor to Tristan. It conveys that we are trying, together, at the highest levels of our ability, to genuinely to grasp Tristan's experience as it actually is, and not to slide by things that are difficult to grasp or that seem impossible.
- 13:40 RTH: Okay. Okay. And I'm, I'm not trying to say I, I prefer one of those answers to the other, which I don't. I'm just, I'm just making wanna make sure that I understand what the [Tristan: Yeah.] as best we can. And I would say the, I'm totally capable of an answering, asking questions that don't have answers or the [Tristan: Right.] not possible answer or not possible to answer today or whatever. And, and part of the task that I, as I see it, is that we, we see how far we can get down these roads and when the roads, when the pavement ends and we're into the weeds or something, then, then we'll back away from that.
- 14:19 So then there's, I'm feeling stomach pain. [Tristan: Mm hmm.] And what, how's that in your experience?
- 14:29 Tristan: Um, it's mostly, it's, I guess it's both cognitive and a physical thing since I've, my thoughts sorta turn to, since I associate it maybe with indigestion and since it informs my thoughts. So it's both a physical thing that, that is sort of informing my thought at

that moment. And it's sort just the pain and, uh, not on the skin, but inside, um, inside the stomach.

15:18 RTH: Mm hmm. And, and I'm not sure that I know how to ask, ask this question either, so we'll, let's see. So does this seem like a physical sensation? I feel pain in my stomach and *then* I analyze that and say, well, it's indigestion. And that sort of becomes part of the, should I poop again swirl of think my, my thinking?

15:51 Tristan: right.

15:51 RTH: *Or*, or does it seem like the original sensation is partially mental?

16:00 Tristan: The former.

16:02 RTH: Okay. Then I think I am good about that.

16:10 AG: Me as well.

16:12 Tristan: Excellent.

16:12 RTH: Okay. On to number 2.

16:15 AG: Mm hmm. Beep 2.

SAMPLE 9.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

16:17 Tristan: Um, beep 2. Okay. Um, so I'm thinking the phrase, uh, or the, the words "make picture." Um, uh, and I'm conscious of listening to pod, to podcast not with much com, uh, not with comprehension. Um, and I'm anxious about the fact that I've sent out an email with the wrong picture size and I'm sort of, I'm playing out a bunch of scenarios for how I'm gonna make the picture smaller. Um, and I'm sort of have this very slightly diffuse imagining of a website that converts pictures to smaller JPEGs.

17:43 AG: Okay. And there's quite a lot of, um, aspects of this one.

17:53 Tristan: Mm hmm.

17:54 AG: Um, are there any pieces that are, are these all separable experiences? Or the, it is the imagining part of the email or is the making the picture smaller related to the imagining? Or I'm just trying, [Tristan: Um.] or at least all separable experience, experiences, sorry.

18:17 Tristan: I would say that there's, I would say, we could probably join the anxiety of sending out the wrong email and sort of wondering how I'm going to make the image smaller, those seem kind of the same thing.

18:31 AG: Okay.

18:31 Tristan: Um, or at, at least in, in the way I'm thinking about it, it's sort of all part of this swirl of, of things I'm thinking about this specific thing.

18:42 AG: Okay.

18:42 Tristan: Um, so yeah.

18:52 AG: Okay. And then of these things, what, what part is the most, um, salient in your experience?

19:02 Tristan: Um, this sort of general anxiety about having sent out the image at the wrong size. I'm thinking about how I'm going to correct that.

19:14 AG: Okay. So by my count we have three things, four things, would you say?

19:23 Tristan: I would say four.

19:23 Russ comments: I think there it is likely (or at least possible) that AG and Tristan are counting different things, in which case this kind of seeming-but-not-actual agreement is likely to work against them in the long term, because the aim of DES is to develop the joint skill of knowing what you're talking about.

19:24 AG: Four, okay. So, and then the anxious thoughts are, is the most, are the rest all the same or is there other things that are higher than?

19:35 Tristan: Um, well, I'd say the word "make picture," that phrase, and which may, there may be a, in parentheses, "smaller," but the, the "make picture" are especially prominent of, of that, um, that I'm thinking that's fairly prominent. Listening to the podcast is less prominent and maybe the least prominent is the sort of mental image of the website.

19:35 Russ comments: Note that that is three things, not four; see the comment at 19:23.

20:02 AG: Okay. So let's start with the anxious thing.

20:09 Tristan: Right.

20:09 AG: Um, so I think I understand the situation that about the email and all of that. Can you tell me how is this all present in your experience?

20:24 Tristan: Um, well, it's not, um, well there *are* words since the "make picture" is, is words, but I'm also thinking the thoughts sort of extend beyond those words.

20:34 AG: Mm hmm.

20:36 Tristan: Um, so the, so I would say there is inner speech at the moment, but there's also a thought that extends beyond the inner speech. So this is kind of all this thought about, and it's sort of like, sort of like the last one where it's like, there may have been a sequence to things popping up, but they're kind of right now all together in there. So

I'm sort of thinking that, yeah, I'm sort of going through scenarios. I experiencing it as a sort of succession without a succession. [AG: Okay.] So, y'know, thinking about ways to, to sort of shrink down this image. Do I have to convert it to jpeg? Do I maybe ask Julian to do it? Et cetera. (That's my brother.)

20:36 Russ comments: Tristan uses the term "inner speech" to describe how the words "make picture" is present. Does he actually experience innerly speaking this phrase? Or is "inner speech" an imprecise way of referring to experience where words are present? So far, we don't know.

21:25 AG: Okay.

21:25 Tristan: Um, so it's sorta.

21:29 AG: So I, I'm sorry, go ahead.

21:30 Tristan: No, you go ahead.

21:32 AG: Um, I was gonna ask, so I hear that the "make picture" piece of this is the inner speech, right? And this anxious part is this thinking or whatever of that *without* words.

21:32 Russ comments: AG uses Tristan's term "inner speech" without attempting to clarify it, which, because it may solidify Tristan's potential mis-description of inner speech, and because it gives the collusive impression that they know what they are talking about, may work against them in the long term.

21:48 Tristan: Right.

21:50 AG: Okay. So, and then once again, are these thoughts, I, I heard, I think the word we used was "succession without succession." So does it seem like these thoughts are coming one after the other, but I just can't put any order to that? Or is it just one big kind of overarching anxiety? And [Tristan: They.] when I put words to it, I put all these things to it.

22:12 Tristan: It seems like they, maybe, maybe there is some sort of succession where some scenarios come after, but at the time of the beep, I'm sorta thinking it all at once.

22:24 AG: Okay. And this makes it seem like a cognitive, analytical type process?

22:35 Tristan: Well, it's quite cognitive, but it's also linked with sort of this affective anxiety around it.

22:42 AG: Okay.

22:42 Tristan: Um, which I would say is sort of.... I'll, yeah. I'll just, I'll, I'll leave it at that.

22:54 AG: Okay. So if I'm understanding this part correctly, there's, I'm anxiously thinking, anxiously cognizing maybe about this email, the picture size, how am I go, or sending

the wrong email, how am I gonna make the picture smaller? Should I convert it? All of this? And it's all just kind of coming one after the other, but it's also not in any type of order in any sorta way. Am I getting that right?

23:27 Tristan: Yeah.

23:28 AG: Okay. Um, okay, cool. Um, so then the second thing was this "make picture." I hear that these are words there. I think earlier we said that it was inner speech, but I wanna make sure I'm being careful about, um, our description. So how, so how are, how is that present?

23:28 Russ comments: It would have been much easier for them to arrive at a description of the "make picture" phenomenon if AG had not mentioned "inner speech" either here or at 21:32. As it is, she has reified the inner-speech description (twice), and will now have to work against that way of describing.

23:47 Tristan: Yeah, it's, um, present as, it's sort of inner speech without, without, it's sort of, how do I describe it? Um, so it's not like I'm literally speaking it to myself or it's not like I'm hearing it inside. Um, and it's not like I'm writing it either, but, so the words are sort of present to me.

24:20 AG: So the words "make picture," if I'm getting, if I'm understanding what you said correctly, [Tristan: Yeah.] the words "make picture" are just somehow there not really spoken, not really heard, not read or written or anything like that?

24:35 Tristan: Yeah.

24:36 AG: Okay. And is it, and it's the word or the words, I guess quote "make picture," or is it, y'know, is that part of, it just sounded like those were, it's first we had said it was like a phrase then we said it was just two words. Are these two words no doubt connected to this whole deal about the picture?

25:03 Tristan: Well, cuz lo, cuz logically I think "make picture *smaller*" is the entire phrase, but in my mind, "make picture" stands out more prominently than the "smaller." Maybe I hadn't gotten to smaller yet.

25:15 AG: Okay.

25:15 Tristan: So maybe it was just "make picture."

25:18 AG: So I'm in the process of "make picture" and I haven't gotten to "smaller" yet. Am I getting that right?

25:18 Russ comments: She is *not* getting that right, because she omits the two *maybes* that Tristan has used. That is, AG has made solidly declarative what Tristan has made carefully subjunctive.

Tristan's (25:03) "Maybe I hadn't gotten to smaller yet" is a natural-attitude (probably faux) explanation—in the real world, it would make sense to think that I

have said the first two words but not yet said the third. But the experiential world is not the real world.

The natural attitude is a main impediment to faithful description of experience. Bracketing the natural attitude (an act that the phenomenologists sometimes call the *epoché*) is a fundamental DES skill, and helping Tristan bracket the natural attitude should be one of the interviewer's main aims. Here, AG works against that aim.

25:24 Tristan: Yeah.

25:24 AG: Okay.

25:26 RTH: Mya, maybe! Maybe!

25:27 Tristan: Possibly, possibly.

25:27 RTH: Yeah, possibly. Or *maybe* he said that.

25:30 AG: Okay, possibly.

25:31 Tristan: Yeah.

25:30 AG: Okay.

25:32 RTH: So we don't wanna clean, we don't wanna clean up or make more logical his experience than it actually is. And [Tristan: Right.] that's not, I'm not to criticize his, his logic, I'm just saying, [AG: Yeah.] it would make sense for it to be "make picture smaller," but that doesn't mean that that's the way, that's the way it was experienced.

25:48 Tristan: Mm right.

25:51 AG: Okay. Um, is there, and it was quote or "make picture" question mark, "smaller," whatever. And did these words have any meaning to them at the moment? Or are they just words present in my experience. No doubt they're about all of this stuff, but...

25:51 Russ comments: I'm no mind reader, but the way AG seems to toss off the "question mark, 'smaller,' whatever" suggests to me (rightly or wrongly) that AG has not grasped the fundamental importance of the distinction being made—that she thinks the "smaller" is maybe experienced. The fundamental DES distinction is between what is experienced and all else. Tristan did *not* say he experienced "smaller." He used *maybe* to indicate that he was speculating about the natural world, *not* describing his experience at the moment of the beep. Apparently AG did not grasp that.

26:08 Tristan: Uh, they, they had the meaning that was associated with them. So yeah, it was, it was part of the anxious thinking, I guess.

26:17 AG: Okay. Um, do you have any more questions about that? [RTH indicates that he does not.] Okay. Um, and then the third part is the podcast. So again, the similar question, um, is this kind of, is this podcast, am I hearing it as I'm going by? Am I aware that I'm not, I'm aware that the podcast is going and I'm listening to it and I'm not paying much attention to it?

26:48 Tristan: Yeah. It's sort of like of a background consciousness that a lot of words are being spoken.

26:54 AG: Okay. A lot of, so when you say background consciousness, like somehow I'm aware that I'm, these words are going on, I'm listening to them, [Tristan: Sure.] but I'm not picking them up.

27:07 Tristan: Right.

27:08 AG: Okay.

27:09 RTH: So that was a meta question. And I'm not sure [AG: Yeah.] if he meant it as meta. Maybe he did or not. So the question is, are the words going by and I am aware of them? Or is it that I am aware of the fact that words are going by? The second would make it meta, the first would be there's just some words, words going by. And when you ask me about 'em, I can say, well, yeah, somewhere in my consciousness there, these words going by.

27:37 Tristan: I think the, the former.

27:40 RTH: Which was the former at, I can't remember which.

27:43 Tristan: Oh, oh, maybe the latter, um.

27:47 RTH: So, so meta, meta or not? That's the question. Does it seem like I am somehow analyzing this and recognizing that I'm not...?

27:55 Tristan: Uh, no, it's not, it's not meta.

27:57 RTH: Okay. So the, the podcast is the, the podcast words are somehow going by and I'm not paying much attention to 'em.

28:05 Tristan: Right.

28:07 AG: Mm hmm.

28:10 RTH: And then I've got a question about the words. So does it, does this, does this seem like words going by or does this seem like meaning going by, like, do I hear word word word word word going by? Or do I hear, well, the, whatever podcast I was listening to, the president was saying this, but I'm just not paying attention.

28:10 Russ comments: See the comments at 11:02, 12:23, and 13:30. The question here is whether he hears a sequence of words (none of which are directly understood), or he hears a man speaking (but is not gleaning the meaning).

28:30 Tristan: Um, words plural. So I don't know if I'm picking out each word by word. I'm just sort of hearing that a whole bunch of words are going by.

28:45 RTH: So in my metaphor from the previous beep, this is more like seeing a bunch of pearls going by rather than seeing a necklace going by.

28:54 Tristan: Right.

29:03 RTH: Okay. Then I think I am good.

29:08 AG: Um, there's one more part.

29:10 RTH: Oh, yes.

29:11 Tristan: Right.

29:11 AG: So the imagining of the website, diffuse imagining of the website. How is that in your experience?

29:21 Tristan: Well, it's a little hard to put down since it is very [AG: Mm hmm.] diffuse but there *may be* certain attributes that I see, such as a search bar that you put something into, um, and a possibly a button that says download PDF or something. Um, but it's, it's quite vague.

29:52 AG: Okay. And by vague, does that mean like, it's so po, little of my experience that I can't really, I know it's there, but I can't really say what it is? Is it vague, like it's not a complete image? Is it vague like it's just, I I can't really get it.

30:13 Tristan: Not, not a complete image, I would say.

30:15 AG: Okay.

30:20 RTH: And is this a *seeing* an, an imaginary *seeing* experience, I'm *seeing* a search bar, I'm seeing a button? Or is it, I'm somehow know, knowing that there would be a search bar and there wouldn't I know that there'd be a button even though I don't actually see it even in my imagination? Or is this too far down into the...?

30:44 Tristan: Well, it's definitely not a clear seeing. It's sort of like a, it's like a sorta imagine seeing.

31:01 RTH: So that's, this is why our, the game that we're playing is difficult. So we're understanding that the whole thing is imagined. All this stuff is in my imagination [Tristan: Right.] somehow.

31:12 Tristan: No, yeah. That, that's correct. It's, it's all in the imagination.

31:16 RTH: And so by saying it's imagined, do I mean that even, even when we're in the realm of the imagination, that this is less visual than, than it might otherwise have been?

31:28 Tristan: It has some visual elements, but it's not like it takes over my,

31:34 RTH: Okay.

31:34 Tristan: Yeah. But it's far enough down that it's not like I'm just like closing my eyes and picturing the scene, y'know?

31:43 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm good. On to number 3.

31:43 Russ comments: "It has some visual elements" (31:28) is entirely ambiguous about whether this experience is of *seeing* at all. But RTH is apparently willing to leave it to the iterative process—maybe subsequent sampling will allow us to examine such inchoate visualization.

SAMPLE 9.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

31:50 Tristan: On to number 3. Um, my friend is, as a matter of fact speaking, and I pick out the phrase "strong desire" she's saying, and that's especially prominent. Um, it may be the last word she said, but, um, but I, it's definitely the, I sort of pick up the, the, I sorta latch on to it. Um, so I'm not, so I'm not sure if they were the last words she said exactly, but there's definitely a, a latching on to that, those specific words, "strong desire."

32:29 So that's one element. The other element is I'm thinking have these sort of anxious thoughts about if going to see this movie alone is worth it, um, if the movie is worth it, sort of that kind, yeah, k that, that, and that's, that's it. Just those two elements. Um, [pause] now.

33:04 RTH: Okay. So, uh, the swirl of thoughts and the "strong desire." Either one of those more prominent?

33:14 Tristan: Um, I would say about equal.

33:25 RTH: Okay. So let's start with "strong desire" then. So my friend, and can we give her a name? Doesn't have to be her name, but something we can call her rather than just my friend?

33:36 Tristan: Sure. Emily and I should also say, maybe I should add that I've also registered with comprehension, sort of what Emily is saying in, in this phrase, beyond just "strong desire." She's saying that she doesn't wanna go to the movie with me, so I've kind of comprehended that and I'm picking out the word "strong desire," especially from her, from what she said, they seem a little more prominent to me. Um, and anyway,

34:07 RTH: So is that to say that she, that she is saying something, "I don't have a strong desire to go to the movie with you," or something like that, and out of that I have latched on to

the “strong desire” portion. But, but both I have comprehended what she has said and I’m latching on to those words.

34:27 Tristan: Yeah.

34:29 RTH: Okay. And, and is, is it possible to say more about the, the *latching onto* what, what is it? Is it those words just seem more prominent or do I repeat them to myself or?

34:46 Tristan: They just seem more prominent.

34:51 RTH: And does that, does it seem like I’ve got sorta two streams of experiences coming from Emily? One is sort of the whole meaningful stream, and one is I freeze this “strong desire” thing, latch onto it?

35:06 Tristan: Yeah.

35:06 RTH: And, and I’m, and I’m, I don’t, I don’t have a theory about how this stuff works, so I’m trying to get, trying to understand how that... So the meaning continues to come, I guess is what the meaning continues to come, but the words seem latched onto?

35:30 Tristan: Right.

35:31 RTH: Is that, is that the gist of it or the heart of it?

35:34 Tristan: Yeah.

35:35 RTH: Okay. Okay. And then there are a bunch of thoughts about, maybe I should go myself. Is it worth it? No, no. Maybe I don’t wanna go.

35:49 Tristan: Yeah.

35:49 RTH: They’re all, all these thoughts are about whether I should go to the movie, about the movie?

35:57 Tristan: Yeah.

35:59 RTH: Okay. And, and are there more than two? Or does it seem like there’s just, Should I go alone? Is it worth it?

36:08 Tristan: Um, I would say that’s, it’s basically that. So I, I wouldn’t say there’s more than I would just say, yeah, I would say it’s just thinking about whether it’s worth it to go to this movie alone if no one else wants to go with me.

36:32 RTH: Okay. And, and this is in, *not* in words I gather.

36:39 Tristan: No.

36:43 RTH: And so does this seem like one thought ,and the, and the thought is basically, *is it worth it going to this movie alone if nobody wants to go with me?* Or does it seem, and, and then when I got, when I have to tell these guys about it, I can say, well, y'know, it's, should I just go alone, is the movie worth it, or whatever? But does it seem like, like one thought and I can I have to say several aspects to it? Or does it seem like a swirl of sort of separable, but related, maybe not swirl, but an overlappingness?

37:21 Tristan: Yeah. If for some reason when I wrote it seemed kinda like they had this overlapping quality to it, maybe because it's not, yeah. It, it seems like it's too somehow diffuse just to say it was this thought exactly. Cuz feels like, yeah, it feels like it has this overlapping quality to it.

37:48 RTH: Okay. Then I think I'm good. On to number 4.

38:02 AG: Yup. Beep 4.

SAMPLE 9.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

38:03 Tristan: Beep 4, okay. So I am reading a text and with comprehension. I am feeling sorta like stuffy and like I have to sneeze. Um, I'm having anxious thoughts about sorta the convoluted nature of this sentence and what that means for me as a, as an academic. Um, and there are sort of like a bunch of some maybe associated thoughts that are hard to pin down with that. Like, will I be able to write like this? Do I want to be able to write like this? Do I want this to be my area of expertise? Um, and I'm also thinking about the nature of when thought becomes reflective or self-conscious. So I'm sort of thinking about what happens when a thought comes into being, um, or sort of this thought becoming, um, I'm, I'm sort of thinking about, in academic terms, about what I'm reading, sort of about thoughts being the ground or the horizon. And then that becoming, um, the consciousness itself becoming the ground against which it can emerge as a figure.

40:00 AG: Okay.

40:02 Tristan: But it's sort of like, I'm sort of wrestling, I'm wrestling with it, so I'm wrestling to comprehend this, and it's sort of coming, maybe it's coming into greater comprehension at that moment, but I still don't really understand.

40:18 AG: Okay. So if I am getting this right, are these three or four things? So is this anxious thinking and the thinking about what happens wrestling with comprehension, is that one thing or are those two separate streams of stuff?

40:39 Tristan: I think they're,

40:40 RTH: *Separable* not, not necessarily *separate*. [Tristan: Separable, yeah.]

40:45 AG: Okay. And of these, what, which is the most salient in your experience?

40:53 Tristan: Um,

40:54 AG: I guess of all four.

40:56 Tristan: I think the, the thinking about my sort of wrestling with the meaning of the phrase I'm reading is the most prominent. [AG: Okay and then,] Which is no, which, oh, that kind of describes two things. The, the, the last thing I described was the most prominent.

41:14 AG: Okay. And then is everything else about the same or is it, um, it's one more than the other?

41:21 Tristan: I would say the anxious thoughts about, about the convolution of the sentence is fairly prominent. I feel that maybe the feeling stuffy and, is a little less prominent.

41:36 AG: Okay.

41:36 Tristan: Um.

41:40 AG: Okay. Um, alright, so let's start about think the thinking about the comprehension, wrestling with the comprehension piece. Um, how is that present in your experience?

41:58 Tristan: Oh, sorry, lemme turn this off. [turns off the beeper] Um, that is present as, um, uh, I, there's almost this sort of spatial element to it as in sort of like, uh, this is this, this is a difficult one to describe. Uh, so sort of like I'm seeing something emerging out of like this, um, seeing something emerges, something is diffuse, and then something emerges and then that something is, let's just say there's a vague, there's a vague spatial element to, a vague spatial element to it has, um, yeah, very vague. Um, there's a, um, it's all very, very half-formed, coming into form in a weird way. But I'm sorta *imagining* something that's half formed coming into form. Um, yeah.

43:36 AG: Um, and is this a visual experience? Or is this, by *spatial* is, or are these, is that like a, you say like, I see this coming into, I can't remember the word you used, but like seeing this something, imagining this, is that like a metaphor for what's happening? Or is that I'm actually seeing these things?

44:01 Tristan: There's something very diffusely visual that I can't put into words about it.

44:08 AG: Okay.

44:09 RTH: And was that present at the moment of the beep?

44:11 Tristan: Yeah.

44:11 RTH: That visual, visual, visual, visuality?

44:14 Tristan: Yeah.

44:18 AG: Okay. And can you tell me again what, what you see?

44:18 Russ comments: "What you see" is more concretely experiential than what Tristan has said (44:01): "something very diffusely visual that I can't put into words." AG's "What you see" has substantially cleaned that up in a natural-attitude way: *if it's visual, he must be seeing it*. If the aim is fidelity, we have to live in the realm of inchoate experience. (See the comment at 25:51.) The good news is that Tristan does not fall for it.

44:24 Tristan: [pause] Um, I, not really, I can just say that there's something vaguely visual about it.

44:43 AG: So it's vaguely visual. Um, I guess I'm trying to get a sense of what vaguely visual, but I can't describe what I see cuz I can't quite get it?

44:58 Tristan: Hmm.

44:58 AG: Okay.

45:04 Tristan: Um, yeah. Yeah.

45:11 AG: Okay. Um, and is this also a, is this vaguely visual and *also* a cognitive or affective type of thing? Or is this purely just this vaguely visual?

45:39 Tristan: No, it's, it's, it's mostly cognitive. It's mostly a cognitive process that has a sort of vaguely, um, visual component that I can't quite, um, can't quite describe. Um...

46:00 AG: Okay. A cognitive struggle, I'm hearing. Something like that?

46:08 Tristan: Y, yeah.

46:10 AG: Okay. Okay. Dr. Hurlburt, do you have any questions about that?

46:20 RTH: I think I'm fine.

46:21 AG: Nope. Okay, alright. And then the next part was the, uh, anxious thoughts about this convoluted sentence, what it means. Um, how is that in your experience?

46:34 Tristan: Right. Um, I would say that that is, as in the previous samples, like there may have been a succession, but now it's just all kind of like a thing. Um, and it's, it's, it's both an affective and a cognitive process, and it's an anxious, anxious thought as well. And it's sort of linked to this diffuse bodily anxiety.

47:09 AG: So there's a diffuse, so if I'm understanding this correctly, is this different than I'm anxiously thinking? There's like a diffuse bodily anxiety and the thoughts said they just seem inseparable in some way?

47:09 Russ comments: RE "if I'm understanding this correctly"
It may seem that the DES interviewer's task is to try to figure out what Tristan means, but that is a misunderstanding of DES. The interviewer's task is to try to help

Tristan describe his experience in such a way that the interviewer *does not have to figure anything out*.

I'm no mind reader, but if AG's (47:09) "if I'm understanding this correctly" suggests that she is trying to understand what Tristan is saying, and if so, she's on the wrong track, for four inter-related reasons. First, AG's understanding (mine, too, and that of all other non-omniscient beings) of Tristan's experience will always fall short of the truth about Tristan's experience, much as a photo will always fall short of the person it represents. Therefore, second, if Tristan understands that he is being asked to agree that AG's understanding is correct, he is backed into a corner, as his (47:24) reluctant "I guess..." indicates—if he is honest, he will always have misgivings about AG's (or mine or anyone else's) understanding. Third, it deprives Tristan of the opportunity to struggle to apprehend, by suggesting that the current apprehension is good enough. Fourth, the object is *not* for AG to try to figure out what Tristan's experience is; AG's object should be to help Tristan to describe his experience in a way that does not suggest a need for us to interpret.

So AG's task is more to articulate what she does *not* understand than what she *does* understand. Her job is to explore ambiguity, not to try to reduce it.

I should emphasize that all the above is *not* about the words—I don't want AG to say "I don't understand" instead of "I understand." There are no correct words. I want AG to do whatever she can to help Tristan describe his experience, with all the difficulties and inconclusivenesses that that effort engenders.

47:24 Tristan: I guess it's the same thing.

47:28 AG: So I'm anxiously thinking, [Tristan: Yeah.] um, do I want this to be my area of expertise? Am I able to write like this? Things like that. And they're just kind of, they seem there's a successive process, but I can't quite put them in what order. Is this like...?

47:48 Tristan: Yeah.

48:06 AG: Okay. Uh, Dr. Hurlburt, do you have anything about this one?

48:08 RTH: Yeah, I do. And, and I'm, and I may have missed what it is he said as I've been trying to figure this out.

48:13 AG: Okay.

48:13 RTH: So is it the case that in this situation not, I don't, I don't know how, how to ask this question either, but it, is it the case that it seems like I'm reading, I'm reading text with comprehension.

48:37 Tristan: Mm-hmm.

48:39 RTH: On, on another layer of that comprehension is wrestling with what it is that this text is trying to say. It's trying to say something about this ground, and then this figure becomes the thought of, I'm trying to figure that out.

48:58 Tristan: Right.

48:58 RTH: And then on top of, and, and that is sort of aimed at the text in a way?

49:03 Tristan: Right.

49:04 RTH: And then on top of that is another layer that is sort of meta to the second to the second layer, which is, do I wanna write like that? Is this good for me? My, my do I?

49:21 Tristan: Right.

49:21 RTH: Is that, so is this like layers of the onion, sort of, there's the text in the middle and then there's one layer that's about the, what does this text mean, and then another layer that's about the, the personal significance for Tristan?

49:37 Tristan: That sounds about right. I mean, layer implies that one thing's over the other. I'm not sure. I'm not sure if there when one's over the other. [RTH: Okay.] Since the, but, but yeah, that sounds about right.

49:49 RTH: Yeah. So we don't wanna get too caught up in my metaphor, in the details of a metaphor, I think, in general, so to speak. But, but, uh, but it, it, it's, it's some form of meta thinking about the text and some form of meta thinking about *my thinking about* the text, it seems like.

50:13 Tristan: Um, yes. Yes.

50:31 RTH: Okay. Then I think I've understood what, what is being said here, mm hmm.

50:40 AG: Okay.

50:40 RTH: And, and what I, what I was trying to, I was trying to work it back, [pause as he looks at his notes] so it seems like most of the thought, most of this are, and, and today, uh, and the samples today is something about a swirl of anxious thoughts. So I keep saying swirl, which is probably not fair, but a collection or a something of meta, of thoughts that are in some way about what I'm doing.

51:22 Tristan: Right.

51:23 RTH: There's the directness of what I'm doing, and then there's a, some thinking about that,

51:28 Tristan: Right. Yep.

51:30 RTH: And in this one, it's, there's yet another layer or....

51:37 Tristan: Yeah.

51:37 RTH: a thinking about the, thinking about the, what I'm doing.

51:40 Tristan: Right.

51:42 RTH: Okay. I'm, I'll have to pull that thread of the yarn through when I go back and look at the transcript, but that's, that's the way it seems to me at, at this moment. These things are, these things are complicated and it's hard to keep track.

51:58 Tristan: Yeah.

52:01 AG: Um, okay. And there is the stuffiness...

52:04 Tristan: Right.

52:06 AG: Okay. How is that in experience?

52:09 Tristan: That's mostly, I would say a bodily feeling. Um, and it's just sort of a feel like almost as if there's a pressure maybe in my nose or maybe a, yeah, just sort of feeling of a tightness in that area.

52:32 AG: Okay. So a pressure tightness in the nose, is that like this, I guess? Well it's a small area.

52:38 Tristan: Maybe it's, maybe it's also that, y'know, a feeling of needing the sneeze, which is sort of this, how do you describe the feeling of needing the sneeze when it's not that strong at the moment? Um, yeah, just sort of like a something. It's something!

53:05 AG: Okay. I think I understood you to be saying this is not too strong at the moment. So is that to say that, um, it's not like I am sneezing, I guess, right? It's just kinda, it's, it seems small or is it that this is not really part of my experience, um, or the sensation seems, seems maybe?

53:26 Tristan: It's not a strong need to sneeze. Um, it's almost like a slight need to sneeze or like a slight, y'know, kinda stuffiness. And it's not that most of my thought is taken over by other things, [AG: Okay.] so this is just a small aspect of it.

53:48 AG: Okay. Like a s Yes. So like a not too strong of a sensation. Like a small sensation. Okay.

53:54 Tristan: Okay.

53:54 AG: Um, anything else about that?

53:57 RTH: And I'm, I'm gathering that this is not cognitive. This is a bodily sensation.

54:05 Tristan: Yeah.

54:06 RTH: And so it's not like I am *thinking* I need to sneeze. It's, I am experiencing this bodily sensation and when I explain it to these guys, I have to say, well, it's like a mild, I have to sneeze.

54:18 Tristan: Right.

54:18 RTH: Is that right? So totally bod, totally bodily?

54:22 Tristan: Totally bodily, yeah.

54:23 AG: Okay. And I wanted to check one more thing before we, um, we end this beep here. I understood that as of that I *am* in fact reading a, reading some kind of text, um, as that's going by. Is that just, that's something I'm doing is a fact of the universe? Or is that at all part of your experience, this reading thing?

54:48 Tristan: Um, it's, well, um, [pause]

55:00 RTH: And here again, we're pretty far down the list, so let's not get too [AG: Yeah.] concerned about it.

55:05 Tristan: Yeah. I'd say that I'm somewhat, um, I, I have some awareness that I'm, that I'm reading. Um, though I'm not having like a thought about that I'm aware that I'm reading.

55:22 AG: Okay.

55:28 RTH: So that is a meta statement. I am aware that I'm reading. It's not just that I'm reading with comprehension, it's that I am somehow aware that I am reading. Is that what you mean to be saying?

55:42 Tristan: Mm. Maybe let's just say I am reading.

55:47 RTH: Okay. So I don't wanna talk you out of that, but I w, there are it's, it's sort of in the, in the realm of the theories that you're, that you're talking about at the end of this beep here, there are theories that say, y'know, you gotta be aware of yourself as reading if you have any awareness at all. But I don't think that's true. [Tristan: Mm.] And so I, or let's put it this way, I, I have, I am an agnostic about whether that's true. [Tristan: Mm.] But what I would like us to do is to not *presume* a meta awareness if there isn't a meta awareness there.

56:18 Tristan: Hmm okay.

56:20 RTH: If there is one, if there is one there. As we have seen when there is, when there I'm all over trying to, not trying to understand what, what is there. But I *don't* want us to fall into the trap of saying, well, if I was reading with comprehension, well I *must have* been aware of that I was reading with comprehension. I don't think that's necessarily true.

56:36 Tristan: Right.

56:36 RTH: On to number, well I guess we are at 10:59 here uh.

56:44 Tristan: Yeah. And that's all that, that's all the beeps I collected anyways. Yeah.

56:47 RTH: Okay. Alright then we're coming, coming out even. So shall we do this again?