

# Getting out of my head: the problem of introspection

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[ 0 : 00 ] Right, so I'm going to talk about the problem of introspection, which I think all modern people struggle with, to some degree or other.

For me, it's quite a contagious modern disease, and one that we often find hard to see ourselves in, the introspective condition, because it's actually so familiar to the way we are.

And it's often not until the serious effects and consequences of introspection show themselves that we become aware, man, I am so introspective. And you'll see, as I reflect on the subject here, that I think introspection is deadly.

So I want to start simply by asking, what is introspection? Poor things, you come for a lunch hour, and you're going to get a bit of a philosophical thing going on here, and then we'll get to the psychological.

But to answer the question, what is introspection, we need to do some basic anthropology, which is, what does it mean to be a human being?

[ 1 : 07 ] Focus on that. And I want to think about the heart. That's the way the Hebrews talk about the inner life of the human being. What is the human heart?

How does it work? For me, there are three functions. I'm sure there's more, but three key functions of the inner life of every human. And each of these three functions play a very important role in connecting us to reality.

Because here we are, subjects, and we're contextualized in reality. And how do we make a connection with reality? And these three functions are key to helping us make these connections. And they all have what I call outer directedness. They help us focus outward, in the outward sense. And these three functions are thinking, being, and doing.

These are utterly critical for how we connect with reality. So in our relationship to reality, first of all, it's critical how we think about it. The way we think about the world around us is actually going to have a huge impact on how we engage with it.

[ 2 : 13 ] So if you're in Athens and you see the big mountain called Olympus, just beyond the perimeter of the city there, if you think in a very ancient way of this big hunk of rock, you'll say, this is a home for the gods.

That's how you'll think about that piece of reality. If you're a modern, you'll say it's just a big chunk of rock. And actually, it's not that impressive. Beside Everest, it's nothing.

And so you'll engage with it, depending on how you think about it. The second, so that's about thinking. The second is the critical issue of how we participate reality.

Because thinking is still cut off from the real engagement, firsthand engagement with reality.

Participation is how we share with it, how we connect with it.

It's the experience of reality. And for me, this takes place primarily through the imagination. And I don't have time to go into depth on this one.

[ 3 : 19 ] We might pick it up in the discussion. But the imagination has this wonderful ability to form mental images or symbols. And it's actually through the symbol that we have the firsthand experience of reality.

So healthy imagination is so important to our engagement with reality. So it's by means of symbols, the mental images, through the imagination, that we make the deep connection with reality.

Our symbolic life is so important for our engagement with reality. So it's how we think about it, how we participate it through the imagination. And then thirdly, it's how we respond to it.

And this brings in the human will, the doing aspect. We engage with reality. It might be a person we're talking to or a paper or a book in front of us.

And we have to respond to it through the will. We've got to make choices. We've got to engage in it through the will. And this is the doing part with respect to reality. Response is prompted by the will.

[ 4 : 23 ] So much more could be said there. But these three functions, mind, imagination, and will, are absolutely critical in our engagement with reality. These things functioning in a healthy way.

And it's interesting, if you look at the Bible, often the Bible is appealing to all three of these human inner life functions. So in Matthew 13, if you look at the parable of the sower that Jesus tells, first of all, it's a story.

So it's appealing to imagination. But he's addressing rationality. The whole point is to bring us to right thinking. And at the end, he appeals directly to the will.

What are you going to do about this? He who has ears to hear, let him hear and get on and make the right choice with respect to what I've been telling you. So you see in the Bible that it's appealing to all three of these inner life functions.

Now, all three functions have quite different operations. They function quite differently from each other. Now, the point is, in terms of how God designed it, is that they're meant to be integrated, all working in a healthy way, and integrated in such a way as that they enable us to reach out and touch reality in a meaningful way.

[ 5 : 36 ] Now, I have to do all that to answer the question, what is introspection? Because introspection, for me, is what happens when rationality, the way we think, no longer has outer directedness.

Because they're meant, all three functions, to have this outer directedness connecting us to reality. Suddenly, rationality no longer has outer directedness, and it turns inwards.

And it's the same with the will. Suddenly, the will becomes much more inner focus than it is outer.

And when that happens, when that inward turn takes place, we become introspective.

And when that happens, we become locked inside of ourselves. And when we become locked inside of ourselves, it actually crushes the power to be.

The power of being, which actually comes through the imagination. C.S. Lewis says that we become ourselves as we move beyond ourselves. And that's actually key to the Christian understanding of what it is to be human.

[ 6 : 42 ] We are the image of God. And an image of representation is nothing except in relationship. C.S. Lewis says that we turn to God.

C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of God. C.S. Lewis says that we become ourselves. C.S. Lewis says that we become real. C.S. Lewis says that we turn to God. C.S. Lewis says that we move outward. C.S. Lewis says that we turn to God.

C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of God. C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of Him. C.S. Lewis says that we become real. C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of God. C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of God. C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of God. C.S. Lewis says that we're a reflection of God. And that is catastrophic in terms of a healthy, functioning inner life.

So what happens at this point is that the inner life becomes a transaction of thinking over being and doing over being. And that's introspection.

Thinking over being and doing over being. Now I want to just look at these two movements to see what's happening. First of all, thinking over being. In the 19th century, there was a very strange Lutheran Danish pastor called Søren Kierkegaard.

[ 7 : 51 ] Kierkegaard, depends how you want to pronounce it. And some people call him the father of existentialism, which was a branch of philosophy, which was very big in the 20th century.

And Kierkegaard often used to lament that the modern had forgotten how to exist. We could only think and talk about being rather than actually participating in it.

And in a sense, even back then, he was reflecting the introspective condition that we substitute for reality merely our ideas about reality.

And the focus is on the thought now, how we think about reality, rather than actually really participating the real. Now my way of illustrating this is crude and perhaps it's offensive to some.

I apologize for that. But I guess if I was asked for a one-line definition of introspection, I would say it's mental masturbation. That's what introspection is. Mental masturbation. When God created us as sexual beings, his intention was that our experience of the act of sex is with another person.

[ 9 : 02 ] It has this outer directedness. And masturbation is when you don't participate anything outside of yourself. It's very inner directed.

There's no connection with a real world. You're in a fantasy world. And that really is what introspection is. Mental masturbation, where thinking, takes place apart from any real engagement and participation with reality.

Because God created us to be thinking and being at the same time. If these things are outer directed, as you think about reality, you deeply engage with it.

They're to complement each other. But when thinking turns inward, it actually creates reality. And being is always connected to reality.

We no longer participate in anything outside of ourselves. And as I said, it's only when we go beyond ourselves that we become ourselves. It's a fundamental truth about ourselves, which I think we have to grasp.

[ 10 : 06 ] Lewis is always, C.S. Lewis is always pointing this out. We become ourselves as we move beyond ourselves. Now when thinking turns inward, and we enter this introspective condition, the thinking dimension soon becomes what I call hyper-rational.

And what we do is start compulsively over-intellectualizing everything. Everything becomes over-intellectualized. And the more we lose the connection with the real beyond ourselves, the deeper the hyper-analysis.

Some people have talked about the paralysis of analysis. You know, the sort of person who can think forever. And it might not just be about philosophy. It might be thinking forever about whether I should ask her out or ask him out.

And just caught in the cycle of thinking, maybe I should, maybe I shouldn't. And the more you think about it, the more you just get crushed and paralyzed in terms of making a response to this person that you should or shouldn't ask out.

And that's what happens with introspection. The thinking just becomes more and more intense. And it's like a tumble dryer. It just keeps going round and round and round. And the more this happens, the more we just get sucked inside of ourselves.

[ 11 : 24 ] And when that happens, we start practicing the presence of self. We just become so self-conscious, so aware of ourselves to the negation of any awareness of that which is outside of us.

So we're just caught up in our own thoughts. And we don't have this capacity to reach beyond ourselves. We're just caught in a cycle of compulsive thought.

I don't know if you guys have engaged much with modernism, post-modernism, and the difference in those conditions. And many will say that the post-modernist is irrational.

But I think we have to be careful in the way we think about that, because I think post-modernity is very hyper-rational. It's always over-intellectualizing everything, thinking, thinking, thinking.

And I think that philosophical trend is true psychologically for so many moderns, compulsively over-intellectualizing everything. So that's thinking over being, the one aspect of introspection.

[ 12 : 32 ] The second dimension is doing over being. And here's a mode of existence where we're always in activity, doing, doing, doing.

And again, this constant activity is at the expense of being. Because if we're just constantly caught up in activity, we don't have a first-hand experience of reality.

And I think it's true of so many moderns again. We can never sit still and hear the birds sing or whatever. Listen, really listen to a piece of music. We always have to be active and busy.

And actually, this mode of existence is always thinking about the next thing. You can't enjoy what's before you right now. You're always having to think about the next thing that you have to do.

So you're, again, disengaged from reality. Because our engagement with reality is always a present phenomenon. We can't exist in the future. We can't exist in the past. All we have is the presence.

[ 13 : 30 ] That's where we engage with reality. But this kind of doing over being is all about thinking of the next thing I have to do. So you never enjoy the gift of the present moment. And it's part of the introspective condition.

Rushing around, engaging in all sorts of activity, but no real first-hand experience of life. I think this is what traveling, modern traveling, has become for so many.

The Americans were masters of it, sort of 30-day travel paths through Europe. You know, I went through Paris in a day. I did Paris, been there, done that, got the T-shirt. But you can't have a

first-hand experience of Paris in a day.

You're usually absolutely shattered because you're rushing all over the place. And you're really not there. I remember a few years ago being in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

But my wife and I were walking through it. And there just happened to be this American woman who sort of followed us through. Sometimes she was ahead of us, sometimes behind her. She had one of these video cameras.

[14:39] And she was looking through this video camera the whole time, taking the live footage of these masterpieces. And if she looked up once, I didn't see it.

So standing there in front of Rembrandt like this, never once did she go... She was looking through here. She didn't once have a first-hand experience of Rembrandt. It was mediated through this wretched machine.

And I just wanted to scream at her and say, Woman, when's the next time you're going to get to come back to Amsterdam to see these great masterpieces? That's a Rembrandt collection. She didn't look at them through her little machine.

That, in a sense, is often how we're experiencing it. It's second-hand rather than first-hand. And this happens if we get caught up in a certain type of activism, which I think is very prevalent in our modern experience.

So much rushing around, but no time to just be. In fact, our busyness annihilates our ability just to be. And that loss is painful for us.

[15:46] And often the way we fill the emptiness, we feel is to become even more busy. And we know this is our state. And this is something that I easily fall into.

I'm terrible in the first few days of a holiday. Sort of antsy. My wife will sound a bit hyperactive. Sort of, oh, what do I do now? Just calm down. Just join the beach. Just sit there.

You don't have to reach or do this, do that. And it's because I've got into this condition. Doing over being. So, these are the two aspects of introspection.

Thinking over being. This compulsive, over-intellectualizing everything. Thought, thought, thought. And the world just goes by us. And the other is just do, do, do.

And again, the world goes by us in terms of first-hand experience of reality. So, that's my basic understanding of what introspection is.

[16:45] What I want to ask now is, what does introspection do to us? This way of being, if I can call it that, being in the introspective way.

What does it do to us as human beings? What's the impact? And there are four things I want to mention briefly here. The first for me is that it actually empties us out. And I think for all the advantages of the modern world, and I'm glad I live in the 21st century.

No interest in going back to the 12th, 13th. It's where a lot of my historical interest is. Sometimes I've been tempted. 21st century for me rocks because I have a little computer in my hand here. I'm wired up. This stuff's good. So, I'm okay with the 21st century. But I would say for all the advantages, we are pretty empty, we moderns.

And actually experience our own inner life is quite empty. Blaise Pascal, who wrote a wonderful apologetic work called *The Penses*, he started the work by saying, man, he wasn't very politically correct back there in the 16th century.

[17:53] Man is happy with God. He's unhappy without him. And I'm not so sure the happiness thing kind of works today. Happiness, you know, clown, nose, big smile.

I would, if Pascal was around today, I imagine he might have said empty. The human being is empty without God. But the possibility of fullness with God.

And I think full empty is perhaps the most powerful descriptive language in terms of describing inner life. And I think all of us know something of the struggle with emptiness.

And emptiness for me is one of the byproducts of the introspective condition. And that's because we're not participating in reality. We don't have this outer directedness, which is so important for a healthy humanity.

So the more cut off we are from reality, the more we're turning inward, the more we're just emptying ourselves out. A little bit like Bilbo, 60 years of wearing the ring, and he felt like a little bit of butter spread over a big piece of bread.

[19:06] And that's what introspection does to us. It leads to emptiness and thinness. And actually, the more thin we feel in our inner lives, the darker we feel.

In the Bible, light is connected to the idea of glory. And glory in the Hebrew mind was an idea that had weightiness behind it.

Something which is glorious is weighty. It's full. And so the idea of light there. Darkness is actually an empty condition. I don't know if you guys have read C.S. Lewis' great divorce.

But when he describes, it's mainly about heaven, but a little description of hell and the darkness and the thinness. Every day you're a thousand miles removed from your nearest neighbor and you become thinner and thinner.

So light, glory, darkness, thinness and emptiness. And I think introspection leads to a real kind of inner darkness that's experienced as emptiness.

[ 20 : 11 ] And that's why for people who are very introspective, darkness is often the most real thing about them. And they identify deeply with their inner darkness. It's the most real thing about me, my experience of darkness.

And they connect with it. And you put two or three deeply introspective people together, that's actually the focus. The focus is on the darkness, the emptiness they all feel.

It's what pulls them together. And I actually really detest introspection because I'm quite introspective myself. I'm drawn in that direction temperamentally.

And for me, it's almost a metaphor of hell. It's such a horrid, horrid condition to be locked into, cut off from reality, just stuck inside of myself.

And because we can only know ourselves by going beyond ourselves, the more I get stuck inside myself, it doesn't lead to greater self-knowledge. It just leads to being thinner and thinner and emptier and emptier.

[ 21 : 09 ] So that's the first thing it does. The second thing introspection does is this, it makes us lonely. It empties us, it makes us lonely. This is a really feel-good lecture.

Sort of pick you up halfway through the day. Loneliness for me is a direct consequence of introspection. Deprived of the power to be, which is this first-hand connection, which is reality. Locked into our own internal world, we no longer have the capacity to form a true bond of intimacy with another human being separate from us.

And that's the problem. Locked into ourself, we can't deeply connect with other people in a real, meaningful relationship. Now, introspection gives all kinds of possibilities in terms of false intimacies.

false intimacies take place largely through fantasy. So, a pornographic world is a highly introspective world. And actually, the connection between introspection and pornography is often very, very, very strong.

[ 22 : 15 ] But even with another person, if you're relating to them, rather than relating to them as someone separate from you, who have their own identity, you just kind of live your life through them, not acknowledging them as separate from you with their own unique person and character and so forth, you just kind of live your life through them.

And often, doing that sucks the life out of them. It's a type of false intimacy. And of course, we're created for intimacy, so it's something we long for, but it's eluding us.

And because it eludes us, we remain the lonely subject and often feel very alone. So that's the second thing it does.

The third thing introspection does is that it makes us unable to live in the present. I've alluded to this already. The only place that we can ever truly be is in the present.

It's the only place where you and I exist concretely. The past is gone, it's over and done with, and we can go to the past in our memory, but it's not reality.

[ 23 : 24 ] It's a picture of reality or a thought about reality that's over and done with. We can think a lot about the future, but the future hasn't come yet. And actually, the future never comes in terms of where we are as human beings.

It's always in the present. Now, now, now, now. So it's only in the now that we can deeply connect to the real. So to be, to really be as a human being is to actualize the present moment, to participate what God gives to us as a gift in every present moment.

But the introspective person can't do that because the power to be has been deeply damaged by hyper-analysis, compulsive thinking, and then lots of activity.

And that means we only live in our thoughts. That's all we have. Reality for us is our own head, what's going on inside of our head. And actually, when we do that, we're straying either towards the

past or towards the future.

But we're never really dealing with the present and what's before us now. And that's a dreadful place to be in, but that's what introspection does. We can't actually receive the gifts of the present moment because we're just living in our own heads, living in our thoughts.

[ 24 : 49 ] Then the fourth thing introspection does is that it paralyzes us with respect to living with wonder. Living with wonder. We live in a world which is full, full of wonder, full of brokenness and nastiness and ugliness too.

But there is so much in every moment that is full of wonder. And actually, the present is full of that which we can't intellectualize fully.

It's too great to be contained simply within a thought. A thought can capture some of it, but there's so much more. And I think this is one of the awful things about introspection, that we can't live with a sense of joy and wonder about the world we live in because everything has to be contained to the thought.

It's all about control. Contained to this thought. And it's interesting at Labrie, we have lots of discussions of people who come from all over the world. And I often notice in our discussions that people today find it very hard to live with mystery.

If you can't explain it totally, it's illegitimate. And that's often a sign of introspection. If there's something which can't be totally figured out intellectually, then it's invalid.

[ 26 : 10 ] But that's the sign that we're not living with wonder. That there are things about reality which actually go beyond the power of intellection, which is why we need poetry. And I would say that.

I didn't do the science track at university. I flung science and math. I was one of those artsy-fartsy type guys who studied on that side of the divide.

But, you know, three cheers for the poets. We need the poetic. And we need the poetic because reality can be explained through intellection, but not fully.

And there are aspects of reality in the realm of the supernatural that need poetry. So even the apostle Paul, who's a pretty, he was a number one intellect, was Paul.

But actually, many times in his writings, when he reaches dimensions of reality in terms of who God is and how he's worked in history, he just leaves all the analytic statements behind and breaks into poetry.

[ 27 : 14 ] Doesn't he? Ephesians 1, he gets this incredible run of poetic outbursts that my English teachers would have killed me for. Run on sentences. It just makes William Faulkner look.

He's a southern writer. It makes him look like a good writer. But that's what Paul had to do. He had to break into poetry. And that's because he had wonder. But the introspection condition doesn't really allow for that.

And that's a problem. So those are the four things which introspection does for us, and all of them deeply, deeply damaging in terms of our human experience.

Let me finish with my last question and we'll open it up for some chat amongst ourselves. How do we escape introspection? It's got to be the most depressing lecture you've ever, ever heard.

And so it's time to ask, is there any good news? And there's no simple answers actually to the issue of how we get out of this because it's so endemic for modern people.

[ 28 : 20 ] But I just want to talk now about the way out. And it's for me one way that has three strands to it. And these three strands are very interconnected.

The first is we've got to hear the call to love. The call to love. Because introspection actually is the opposite of love.

And it's the opposite of love because in introspection everything is directed to the self. It's not outer directed, it's inner directed. All completely self-referential which is the opposite of love.

Where, by way of contrast, love is outer directed. That's how love functions. So the call to love, which we could turn to dozens of passages in the Bible, the call to love, which is the mark of the Christian, is the call to get out of our heads, to stop over intellectualizing everything, and to engage with other as other.

The other person is someone who's separate from ourselves. It's a love affair with that which is beyond us. And that means opening our eyes and ears to reality.

[ 29 : 39 ] My daily prayer is that Lord give me eyes to see and ears to hear so that I can get out of my head and live the life of love that you've called me to.

And that means standing in the present. Standing in the present and reaching out to those who are in need around us. And rather than introspectively leads to the condition we just want to talk about ourselves or have everything reflected back to us, it's taking a real interest in others who are separate from our own existence.

And it means living with wonder in terms of all that God has made. It's a love affair with reality. It's receiving everything with thanksgiving. And above all, it's the call to love God who made us, proved for us day by day, who loves us, and called us to love Him.

The call to love is a call to step out of our heads and to actually engage in real things. receives His gifts.

So that's the first way out of introspection. It's just a deep commitment to love. And love and introspection are opposites. The second thing here in terms of the second strand of this one way is we've got to hear the call to solitude.

[ 31 : 01 ] The call to solitude and quiet. And the call to solitude is really a check on this activism that I talked about earlier where we're just doing, doing, doing, never actually resting in the present and receiving God's gifts.

I think it was best put by Simon and Garfunkel. You say that dates me, but they're pretty good, you know. When I saw them in concert, there was punk rockers and granny side by side, swaying. It was fantastic. I've never seen a concert quite like it. And you know, you probably don't know it because I'm aged listening to this stuff. But they got this wonderful song, Slow Down, You Move Too Fast, Gotta Make the Morning Last, Kicking Down the Cobblestones, Looking for Fun and Feeling Groovy.

There's a lot of biblical realism in that. Slow down, you move too fast. My wife's voice saying, why are you running, Andrew? Slow down, you move too fast. Gotta make the morning last.

And for me, solitude is the place where we can listen attentively to that which is beyond us. I think the power to be starts in the place of quiet.

[ 32 : 19 ] And as for me, one of my daily disciplines, I do it early in the morning, is actually I don't open my Bible and start reading right away. I just stop and I just be quiet.

And I just listen to the birds, the dawn chorus. It just gets me out of my head. and I hear the clock ticking away in my study there. The kids beginning to turn over in bed as they think, oh, it's time for another day at school.

It's just listening. It's an incredibly powerful exercise just to stop and listen to that which is going on outside of us. It just, and that's, you have to be quiet in order to listen.

So I don't think we can ever be out or directed until we learn how to stop and listen. And that means we need to be in solitude. So that's the second thing that we need to be committed to.

The psalmist in Psalm 46 says that we must be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God.

[ 33 : 27 ] It's an imperative actually. It's a command. You must be still in order to know that I am God. The place of stillness is where we are able to engage with ultimate reality in the person of God himself.

And then the third strand for me is obedience. You hear the call to love, the call to solitude, and then the call to obedience. Of course, obedience is a bit of a swear word today.

It sounds so oppressive and all the rest of it. But the, and it's something Jesus talks about so often, especially in John, John 13 to 17, he's talking about love and obedience as being the same thing. Those who love me are going to obey my law, my command. And the great thing about obedience is that true obedience is obedience to something which is outside of us.

It's not being obedient just to our inner voice and what we feel is right or wrong in any given situation. It's actually being obedient to a way of life which is prescribed by the God who made us and by Jesus Christ.

[ 34 : 37 ] And that's outside of ourself. That's why I like the Sermon on the Mount. You read it and you think this is bigger than me, much bigger than me in terms of what it calls me to. And to hear the call to obedience is actually to see law as not oppressive.

It is oppressive to the introspective at one level because actually doesn't fit in with this interior world where we're going to define what's right and wrong.

But actually when you see law as something so bigger than me that I blend in with, that I bow to, that I submit to, and you see this is actually beautiful.

It's not ugly. It's beautiful. It gets you out of your head. It's very, very powerful. And it's why in raising children, it's not oppressive to say, you know, doing what mommy and daddy says is a good thing. It's actually helping them to see that it's a small world to actually just be obedient to your own whims and fancies. It's a big world to say there's a law beyond ourselves, bigger than my head, which God calls me to submit to.

[ 35 : 42 ] And there's joy in actually doing that. So for me, a commitment to love, to solitude, and to obedience is a commitment which can lead us out of introspection.

And because I feel introspection is so endemic to the modern psyche, if I can put it like that, a commitment to follow Christ is really being saved from this, to be saved from the introspective condition, which for me is a mirror of what hell is like.

And I'm not saying that non-Christians can't find ways out of introspection. They can. Healthy living is always going to be against introspection.

But the commitment to Christ really lays before us something which can take us beyond this condition and free us from it to engage with reality in all of its fullness and ultimately engage with God himself.

So that's a little rampage on the introspective condition. As I said in my talk, I don't say this all judgmentally as against anyone here.

[ 37 : 00 ] I myself find so many deep introspective tendencies in myself and it's why I'm able to speak about it with a little bit of understanding because I know myself.

And this part of myself I don't like. And I've known encouragements over the last years in becoming a little bit more free from it in terms of my commitment to follow Christ.

Right. I've done enough talking. It's time for you guys to start talking. Do you have any questions or comments? I just find it quite difficult to make this distinction between thinking and being.

I mean, I definitely level myself as a expected person and it's not a problem. And the main question is, if I don't know if I'm selfish or God, then at some stage I've got to start thinking again.

And also what is the difference between obedience to God and the thoughts in my head that was quite a little bit shimmy.

[ 38 : 28 ] And if I am thinking, will I be able to evade? I'll have to think about that. Absolutely. That's where at the very beginning, it's helpful, it's a good question.

At the beginning I said that the functions of the human heart, the inner life of every individual, they're these three functions which all have outer directedness.

And they're all totally legitimate and actually absolutely necessary to engage with reality. So I'm not for a moment wanting to paint a picture of being without thinking. Thought is one of the greatest gifts God has given us.

I love thinking about reality in terms of understanding it. And like I said about Olympus, it determines how we engage with reality. How we think about reality determines how we engage with it.

The problem is when the two of them turn inward and then that type of thinking is destructive because it crushes the power to be. So I would say when thinking is outer directed and do it as a response to reality, these things are going here, then the being thing is going to be helpful too.

[ 39 : 38 ] And when you have being, it doesn't mean you stop thinking, but it means that as you think about reality, you're also engaging with it deeply. And you're not just in the thought world.

It's sometimes in a very special occasion and you're aware that you're not really there. You're there in your body but you're not there anywhere else.

You're lost and that's because it's going in the wrong direction. It's inner focus rather than outer focus. So the healthy human existence that God created is for all three of those working very differently from each other, mind, imagination, will, but all of them integrated together to give us the deep participatory experience of reality.

So long live thought but it's how we think. And it's what I love about ideas and I love thinking with others. I don't think often very well by myself when I start to go into my tumble dryer.

But the great thing about sharing an idea with someone else, whether it be theology, philosophy, or politics, whatever, is that you're engaged with it and it's it gets the thought here and suddenly I feel it comes back with this and I come, that's a great way to think.

[ 41 : 01 ] So in terms of the direction of the perspective of the direction of the content, I mean, if you want, I mean, quite a lot of times you need to think about yourself.

I don't know about anyone else but I think quite a lot about who I am and that's always in comparison to other people.

So if that's thinking out, that's the limits to something. I mean, from what you expect that to mean does seem like a huge bit of self-announcement and introspection.

But on the other hand, how do you handle those kinds of questions? Who are I? What I'm going to say here, what's your name?

What I'm going to say here you might find quite shocking. I think understanding ourselves is important, but I think we make very little progress doing that on our own.

[ 42 : 04 ] Because I don't think it's possible for the subject to know the subject. So I'm totally committed to this and it outrages people. I know you, I just found out your name five seconds ago.

I know you at quite a comprehensive level better than you know yourself right now. And you know me better than I know myself. She's not sure.

And I know nothing of your history. I know your English. Definitely not northern. Oh, right.

But I see you as you are. Just the fact that I've seen you. You have never ever seen yourself before. You've seen representations of yourself, but you have never seen yourself.

And for me, I love to think of the human self, which is a very supernatural dimension of who we are. The way it becomes incarnate in flesh is actually in our faces.

[ 43 : 09 ] I can just see the tip of my nose there, but I've never seen my face before. Or as I see your face, a three dimensional, real engagement with your face, you've never seen it before.

they're not. And it's why every time a group photograph comes out and you're in it, you always look at yourself first.

There's no exception to that. We always look at ourselves first. And one in a hundred pictures do you say, I think that is me. The rest of me say, that doesn't really look like me. That didn't get the real me.

We're often quite surprised at our appearance in a photograph. And we freak out most of us. I don't know about you, Philip, but when I used to be a pastor and Helen was looking after the kids and on a Monday she'd be listening or Sunday afternoon listening to my sermon on a tape and I'd walk into the room and just call, oh, I don't stand hearing my own voice.

That's not me, is it? So we live with ourselves 24-7, yet we know ourselves so poorly. And philosophically, I do a number of lectures where I try to demonstrate this.

[ 44 : 20 ] Far too complex, but to show that it's impossible for the self to know the self. Which is why endless self-analysis I don't think leads to much. And that's why the power of a friendship, a significant friendship for someone, I just learned to listen to my wife Helen.

When she tells me something about myself, she's invariably, absolutely spot on. And I'm so shaken when someone tells me something about myself, which I'm convinced is not true, and yet they see me much more clearly.

So I would say it's important we know ourselves, but I don't know how much we can do that on our own. And I would say the type of analysis that we're supposed to do, and the Bible does say examine yourself to see whether you're in the faith, but it's always with a reference point.

That is, there's something clearly objective. And as Christians, I say we do that self examination in the presence of Christ, who is in us, and with us. So it's not introspection, it's in the presence of another, and it's all reference with respect to who he is.

And Robert Murray McShane, who is a Scottish divine, as they call him, died when he was 29, he said, for every one look you take at yourself, take 10,000 at Christ. And I think he got the proportions that are absolutely spot on.

[ 45 : 42 ] He said, for every one look you take yourself, take 10,000 at Christ.

Yes. So I am, yeah, hyper self consciousness, I think, is so fruitless because I don't think it reveals very much.

I see it sometimes when I look at my, I don't keep a regular journal, but you have those moments and you think, this is it, this is who I am, and you write it down. And then, two years later, you come to another self discovery, and you look at the old one and you say, well, which one is true?

But if we do it with another, I think, then we have a far better basis for understanding ourselves. Absolutely.

But it's in the presence of another, and it's their questions which help you. I mean, a lot of my work at Libri, I suppose, is a type of counseling. And when you hear a very negative statement from

someone about themselves, often you can, I'm ugly, someone said to me.

[ 47 : 16 ] I said, I'm just so ugly. I said, I can tell you for a fact you're not ugly. That is a lie you're telling yourself. It's just not true. That's how they felt, but it wasn't true at all.

And I wasn't, that wasn't just nice, Andrew, to be nice to them. It just was not true. So that's the power. I think that's where counseling is so valuable, that you're doing it in the presence of another. And it's why you need someone else, because we can't actually uncover a lot of what's really driving us in our inner world on our own. Do you think at university life to quite like in the reason that in my course I've got a few I've got a lot of reasons where all my own are using you know and I think as well.

So do you make that help you? Yeah. I think it can be. It could be an introspective trap. I also think that university offers possibilities for community which when people leave university often they really miss.

It's they're just in their car traveling to work in the office but not really engaged with people in the office and then come home and they're shattered and often that's a real shock to the system because the dynamic of community isn't there.

[ 48 : 45 ] Even if it's a Christian their local church is often not very engaged in terms of the community of the local church. Whereas I think university offers amazing possibilities for really sharing life.

I traveled down with a guy here I just started university just so lonely he's a really sociable guy but he feels so lonely just being very honest about it and I felt that my first year at!

I'm involved in everything but when I went back to my room I just felt so lonely and so that can lead to a certain kind of interaction too.

Christian union meeting union union and to people and people and people and people and people to themselves in the Bible I was thinking about the psalmist who talks to himself and why you cast down in my soul and you have Paul who says I don't understand myself I do what I shouldn't do I can't think he says I am fitness no one knows the father the son and the son Jesus revealed I like what you do with Jesus he makes some incredibly strong identity statements to say I am is huge but all of his are absolutely right whereas my I am statements are almost always off the mark I am a laborer I am a pastor the problem isn't it because it's not what we are it's a role we've taken on but it doesn't define us whereas Jesus I am statements were true and when I take a few days out every once in a while to just be really quiet and often I go through the I am exercise right down what I think I am to rediscover actually I'm not these things I am what I am in Christ so Jesus stated what he was very clearly the psalmist who talked to himself why are you cast down all my soul psalm 42 and 43 I love those psalms but it's interesting he was talking to himself rather than listening to himself and for me introspection is often more about listening to yourself so it just goes on and on this listening exercise where talking to yourself giving yourself a good kick up the be sometimes is and actually for me talking to myself can sometimes shake me out of my introspection so the distinction between listening to yourself and talking to yourself

[ 51 : 55 ] I think is a good one it's counselors who listen to you and you do the talking and then your third example was one of your three was Paul yeah yeah yeah I mean it's lovely when you get reflections of the trinitarian life that it's it's outer focused again and so John 1 1 the word was with in the beginning was the word and the word was with God I take the view that actually with in the Greek is toward and the idea of the father and son face to face or one looking at the other is outer!

and he rather radically says that the real understanding of marriage is you have two people they're not meant to be just looking at each other they are there to work together for the community or for God and that's the same sort of idea absolutely yeah that's right interesting