

8th June 2021

Introvert

“Love is essential, gregariousness is optional.”

Susan Cain, Manifesto, 'The Power of Introverts'

Susan Cain is an American writer and lecturer, and author in 2012 of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (www.thepowerofintroverts.com). She argues cogently that modern western culture misunderstands and undervalues the traits and capabilities of introverted people. In an interview in *The Globe and Mail* Cain said: “Most introverts aren't aware of how they are constantly spending their time in ways that they would prefer not to be. They've been doing it all their lives, so it just becomes second nature. I'm trying to give people entitlement inside their own minds to be who they are.” In a *New York Times* essay, she offered this piece of self-analysis:

For seven blissful years I had spent my time reading, writing and researching a book about introversion. But the publication date had arrived, the idyll was over, and my metamorphosis was complete. I was now that impossibly oxymoronic creature: the Public Introvert.

I've been pondering this after I was interviewed for a magazine by a journalist I know well. She's pleasant company, engaging and good at her job. I asked her how she'd coped working from home in the past year. “I've loved it,” she said. “I don't have to play a part. I'm an introvert who enjoys being me.” I have a friend who's a serial entrepreneur, has a wide circle of friends and can be the “life and soul” in company. Yet he describes himself as “an introvert acting as an extrovert” – the “*Public Introvert*”.

The dictionary definition of “introvert” is “a shy, reticent person”, with synonyms such as “recluse”, “misanthrope” and “nonconformist” – all negative. Yet the word originates from the Latin *introvertere* – *intro* (to the inside) and *vertere* (to turn). It's basic meaning, therefore, is “to turn one's thoughts inwards” in spiritual contemplation. Negative? I think not ...

So, I'm with Susan Cain, if to be introverted means turning my thoughts to spiritual contemplation and learning to be the real me. The Covid-19 pandemic? An opportunity to find the introvert I really am, and to discover, and value, a much-needed balance in my life.

A prayer for today

Lord, when I turn inwards and find myself, will I find even more of you there? Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>