

# INWARD AND OUTWARD

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There are two feet on spirituality the whole world over. If we don't use them both... picture people hopping around on one leg, ; picture someone with one stationary foot, going around in circles with the other foot terribly active.



One foot is the **inward journey** into the depth and mystery of being human. Living life to the full. The other foot is the **outward** journey of doing and striving. Living life for the best.

Throughout history, people have argued over which of the two is the most important. It doesn't take long to see that one without the other is not going to get us far. The Hope Discovery Tour believes we must walk with both feet, and not keep going around in circles.

The catch is that each one of us probably has our own small internal war going on about which is best. We sometimes get confused about the right way to act in a given situation.

To resolve it, most people today will say something like "go with your heart", but which part of my heart? There are at least six layers of my heart and each one can have a strong voice, each one can be a strong gut feeling, and each one can be a big mistake:

1. **First impressions** are powerful and can be misleading.
2. Each of us has **blind spots** – things of which we are totally unaware at this point in time.
3. Each of us is swayed by **others' opinions**.
4. Some of us are heavenly imprinted by the problems in our **parents' example** to us.
5. Our **ethnic or cultural values** may be unconsciously moulding us to think one way, which seems "common sense", but it is really just one way.
6. A **deep hurt** or trauma makes us avoid things, and sometimes we don't even know why.

IN addition, there are at least four ways of being biased about the inner and outer paths:

1. **Our personalities** are usually slanted one way or the other – introvert or extrovert. But a healthy personality is not exclusively one or the other.

**2. Our jobs or roles** may require of us that we spend a lot of energy being one more than the other. No wonder we get sick if we do not make time off to restore the balance.

**3.** The same can be said of our **life-stage**. Richard Rohr the Franciscan priest runs a “Centre for Action and Contemplation”, and says that the first half of our life is dominated by the need for action and the second half is dominated by the need for contemplation. “The unreflected life is not worth living” said Aristotle (or was it Socrates?)

**4. Our religious history** may be more one than the other . Contemplative services v. singing services, quiet prayer v. long preaching. Worship v. Mission. It is increasingly being seen that they are both feet are necessary – times of action, times of stillness. However, the late twentieth century parishes have generally taken the middle ground of “better organisation” and as a consequence have been neither enthusiastic nor still enough.

Classically the Latin names of the ‘two feet’ are *via negativa* and *via positiva* - respectively, that which is best understood in terms that cannot be fully known and that which can be very much understood and explained.

Or the Greek names - *apophatic* and *kataphatic* – respectively, that which can be spoken of directly and that which can only be spoken of indirectly.

The apophatic way emphasises the mystery of God, and the kataphatic emphasises what God has revealed.

It doesn’t take long to see that different denominations, age groups, or different personalities work better in one of these ways than the other. There is a large literature which explores the subtleties and variations. Our purpose here is simply to note the difference and the bias it will have on our thinking and our listening.

You can see this concept “both feet” concept reaches far. It is another description of whole-person healthiness and vitality, to be able to move among all these dimensions. The difference it makes when you or I enjoy access to this kind of vitality in your life is like the difference between feeling sick and feeling well.

**In the spirituality of Jesus**, he was often connecting the two, like a cross shape.

In terms of our methods, for instance, in the story of the prodigal son, the Father’s love waits in agony for the son to wake up to himself (waiting is apophatic, God speaks indirectly) . In two other stories in

the very same chapter of Luke 15 - the shepherd's love and the woman's worry - takes them out searching strenuously until they are successful (active seeking is kataphatic, God speaks directly).

In other words, Jesus stands at the intersection of global spiritualities and combines all of all these dimensions. He is the most fully human and fully alive. The question for us is whether we will join him there, walk the road with him, or remain disconnected, one-sided and off-colour.