Participant number 23 – Male, 23, Hackney

Interviewer: Um… so can we start by talking about what you’ve put first please?

Interviewee: Mhm.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Interviewee: Yup. So the first image represents um… pretty much- pretty much the world as a whole. It’s an image that represents two paths. The path that you see on your right is the path that the common person, the person that likes mediocrity and that’s taught what to do- follows, you know, lives the- live the average life. [Interviewer: mm] They will settle for mediocrity, don’t take any risks, um… do this and you’ll be safe and do this, you have a house. But the person- the path on the left… represents uh the one that wants to break out the mould and um… that wants to walk- take- you know, walk away from the pack. The path of loneliness, you know, to be honest, you know, sometimes it’s seen as a negative thing and a lot of people don’t have the grit or the emotional armour to deal with it. But actually the path of loneliness is actually a very beneficial one to one’s upbringing and to one’s uh… succession in life. Um… you know, uh… there is a- I- I just wanted to read you a quote real quick, can I quickly grab it? [Interviewer: yeah sure] It’s written down [unintelligible 1:44]

Interruption

Interviewee: So it’s a quote by Sinroe Suzuki from Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind. [Interviewer: mhm] “In the beginner’s mind, there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind, there are few”. [Interviewer: mm] Now… for me personally, loneliness can be seen in two ways. It can be seen as something that’s quite soul-consuming and negative and quite depressed, or you can actually take heed from it and realise that… in a way we- we- we- we are born alone and we don’t share graves with anybody. And most of our like experiences in life are for the benefit for ourselves only and only ourselves can put us- go through it, you know? We can have some help on the way, maybe some advice on the way, a little bit of a helping hand. But effectively, whether you like it or not, most things you do in life, you know, will be uh… by yourself, you know? So the sec- the first image is a very powerful image, ‘cause it’s not an image that I’ve come up with my head, it is an image that I’ve seen once upon a time [unintelligible 3:17] but it resonates very well with me. But um… it’s- it’s the lone- it’s the lone wolf that… you know, strays away from the pack and decides to uh find oneself, you know. And then… when the time is right, maybe the paths could uh… criss-cross again, you know? That’s what the first image represents to me.

Interviewer: Mm. Thank you. So it sounds like what you’re saying is um… in life there are two paths, one path is basically for the average people who follows that, you know, part of the conventions and so on. And then the other path, which is the left one, is about kind of, you know, the path of one who takes risks and- and so on.

Interviewee: That’s one way of looking at it. But alter- alternately there’s only the- the- there are only two paths in life. It’s true- truth or the falsehood. [Interviewer: mm] And it’s entirely up to one’s- the- the- the person, how he wants to distinguish what truth and then what tr- what a falsehood is. But you- we all no deep down inside- in our hearts where we act to listen to, that little voice or not, what is truthful and what is false.

Interviewer: When you say true and false, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Well truth and falsehood- again, what- whatever I’m saying it’s subjective. You know what I’m saying, it’s subjective. But truth and falsehood is… to understand what is our purpose… what is our purpose... what is our purpose to… [unintelligible 4:48] our desires, our temptations, is it to… is it to adhere to the way we’re expected to live our lives. You know. Or is there a more divine path that we sh- we should be following. [Interviewer: Hmm] You know. Do we- do we adhere to man-made laws or do we ma- adhere to more diviner laws. You know? Truth-hood and falsehood, you know? Again, it’s subjective. People have different religious beliefs. People have different ways of looking at their life but I- I- life and the world. But I think in every single human being on this planet that there is a voice, something inside you that knows what is good for you and what is bad for you. Whether you choose to listen to it is entirely up to you is entirely up to you. But if you don’t want to listen to that little voice, you’re doing yourself injustice. [Interviewer: Mm] You know? You can stray people away… as hard as you- as much as you want, but you’re doing yourself as injustice as well as them.

Interviewer: When you say astray people, [interviewee: yeah] tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Astray people from- from the path of- [interviewer: yeah] mm. One must ask themselves what it is, why has- why have we been created. [Interviewer: mm] I don’t believe in just… you know, spontaneous creation. Same way Steve Jobs created the iPhone, everything has a creator. Uh, things cannot simply create themselves. [Unintelligible 6:32] definitely goes against the laws of this- of the- of science at least, in that respect. I believe… I- I didn’t have any particular- I did have a rel- a particular religious belief growing up. Whether I want to belief in it outright. I didn’t really at first, but then I start- and my mind like ponders. My mind like ponders so… I’ve come to the realisation that things must be created, or things rather cannot create themselves. It’s impossible. Um… um, I believe there is a creator and that things have an order… and that we were created for a purpose. Purpose is to worship the creator. Uh… and to live our- our best a productive- most productive lives, to do good to one another… by doing good- it’s easier to do good than to do bad. You have to go our of your way to do some- to do something bad. But to do good is very very easy. Smiling to somebody, giving good like tidings, advice to somebody… these um… these- these are good things, you know. Uh… it’s good energy. When someone is good or does good things, you feel their energy. You feel their energy, you feel their vibe. You gravitate towards them naturally. Um… when someone does bad things, you wanna stay away from that person. It’s like a bad stench. Don’t wanna be around someone that has a bad stench. Unless they have a good stench, you know? Um… a good smell, I should say. Um… yeah.

Interviewer: Um… okay. And- and how- and how does that impact uh the experience of loneliness?

Interviewee: How does that impact the experience of loneliness… to- to know that- loneliness, just to feel that you are- to feel that you are alone and um… ‘cause they say- they say in certain passages that I have read in certain scriptures that the- the… the devil, they say, the devil himself attacks those who are lonely and puts thoughts into your head… uh…thoughts of despair and negative feelings. But [unintelligible 8:52] we’re not really actually alone. We’re constantly… you know, the creator can see all and hear all. He’s all knowing, he’s omnipotent, he’s all- ever-present. The fact that we’re not- we may not- we may be alone from- we may be away from other human beings, but we’re not actually truly ever alone. And once you r- grasp the fact that the creator… and the most high is around us, and is constantly seeing and- seeing us, and is with us and sustaining us, you can never truly feel alone. You can never truly af- feel alone. If you choose not to believe in that fact, then you’ll have this feeling of emptiness and this loneliness that all-consume. But if you realise that the one that created you, that sustains you every single day… is with you, then… with me, [unintelligible 9:44] personally, I don’t think it- you know, I don’t... I don’t think um- like to me, that’s empowering. That’s empowering, you know. I always choose to- to beg to differ and say, you know, religion is just a way of just making rationality of things and co- a coping mechanism. Some religions maybe, perhaps… perhaps… perhaps there’s some truth. But again I don’t think there’s the one- the one thing you can’t deny is that things are created. So there must be a creator. Can’t just- just came to be. You know, science would disprove that as cause and effect. [Interviewer: hmm] Mm.

Interviewer: Um… so you’re saying that the people for example on this column, on the right column [interviewee: mhm] that you drew, um… so these people are following sort of-

Interviewee: Following their desires. Following- follow- following what society’s dictated to them. Following what man’s told them what to do. You know? Um… [interviewer: and-] this indoctrination. But… at times there are ones that just break free from the mould, you know, take off all the sludge off them and whatever they’ve been told to- to think and do. Uh… there are those that wish to live their lives differently and holistically and seek a higher purpose.

Interviewer: So are you saying that these people are more vulnerable to feeling lonely? Tell me more.

Interviewee: They are. Of course they are. So long as they follow their desires, of course. Of course. [Unintelligible 11:25] if you follow your desires, you will follow loneliness. You follow short term happiness, you will only find the loneliness. And despair. You will need to find something… longevity. Long term happiness.

Interviewer: When you say short term happiness, [interviewee: yeah, short term happiness-] can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Short term happiness is the things like… chasing materialistic things, you know, clothes and uh money and women and… drugs and alcohol. Make you feel good in the short term but in the long term, it’s detrimental. Extremely detrimental.

Interviewer: When you say detrimental-

Interviewee: Detrimental to… I mean, like really truly if I asked you… are drugs good for you? Is alcohol good for you? They make you feel good for a very short period… you know? Show me someone that takes alcohol and drugs every single day and feels constantly happy about themselves. Show me someone that shops every single day that feels constantly happy about themselves. Show me that- the one that… sleeps around and does this every single day and still feels happy about themselves. I mean they can lie to people, they can’t lie to themselves. You can see it’s evident within themselves- within their faces.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: How does that make me feel? Well, if- with other people doing this? Doesn’t really affect- doesn’t really affect me. Just- just the way how the world is. Some people- you’ve just gotta wait for- wait until people break out their own mould, in their own time. People wake up in different stages. You can’t change- you can’t um… you can take- take the horse uh to water and all but you can’t force the horse to drink out the well. So, it’s up to them, when they want to… when they wanna drink and wake up. You can only advise.

Interviewer: So what you’re saying is um… um… people who, people who experience loneliness because they follow their own desires, they go after material possessions or things that make them- give them sort of a short term happiness, as opposed to-

Interviewee: That’s- that’s one of- one aspect of feeling lonely. There are other things. There are problems from the st- from the start of the race, you know. Like… uh… for instance, feeling… like a… for instance, say for example… the child that was raised in care and that is raised by foster parents who doesn’t look like her or him… raised in an area where they’re seen automatically as an outcast. You know um… not fitting into- other kids that don’t fit into school… you know um… into different things. It’s exactly- it all boils down to this picture. The one- like this is mainstream society and this is someone that’s just trying to do their own thing. You know? The right represents the mainstream society, where everyone’s told what to do, do this, you look cool. Fit in, fit in, fit in. Adhere to this, adhere to that. Don’t stray, you know, you’ll get what you want. It’s indoctrination from… and it starts as early as primary school. While you’re at nursery. You do this, you do this, you do this, you do your exam in this way, exam questions are structured in a certain way, they’re looking for key words. Yet if you stray, if you input your own- uh… if you put- if you put into your own input and… dive more deep into the subject matter, it’s seen as the wrong answer. But is there a right or wrong answer when it comes to these exams? Do you understand? Then you’re made to feel like an outcast or you’re stupid. Constantly. But infact you’re actually quite intelligent. It’s crazy so it’s indoctrination, conditioning… to make you… you know, like a little nut or- or bulb in- in- in- in the great- in the greater machine, you know? So it’s- if you’re faulty you’re- you’re an outcast. You’re thrown away. So where are outcasts thrown into? Places like jail. Or… you know, other places. You know? That’s what it is. So loneliness… loneliness, it’s not always a bad thing. It’s not always a bad thing. It’s how you see it. It’s… it’s a matter of perspective. [Interviewer: mm] such things [unintelligible 16:20].

Interviewer: So peop- someone who’s on this path, kind of deviating from what the norm is and what the expectations and conditionings are, [interviewee: mhm] so this person you’re saying that loneliness is not always a bad thing for this person.

Interviewee: It’s not always a bad thing, no.

Interviewer: And when you said fitting in earlier, [interviewee: mhm] you said like… constantly trying to fit in, fit in. [Interviewee: mm] Tell me more.

Interviewee: Just- just being a yes person. Yes sir and do this and do that. [Unintelligible 16:51] I have an entrepreneurial mind set, you know. And entrepreneurs are rebels… and risk takers… through nature. Phil Nike is a great example of that. Phil Nike is the guy that created- the CEO of Nike. He um… intelligent, [unintelligible 17:09] he was. And um… he went to Stanford business school, got his grades, was really good at doing the track but he… his father was the person that seeked respectability. His mother was quite a shy woman, you know… uh… grew up in Oregon- I think Portland Oregon, grew up in. Um… grew up in an American society where- it was a hard-working environment he grew up in and… and then yeah, he wanted to do something crazy and he was a risk taker and then he- he went out to Japan and started his own company called I think The Blue Ribbon, you know? He had a deal with Onitsuka His father didn’t want him to do stuff like that, his father just wanted him to do something mediocre. But he says, in the book, in his memoirs, mediocrity- he hated nothing more than mediocrity. He didn’t wanna be the average guy, he didn’t wanna be a- a sales person selling encyclopaedias in Hawaii. No… all risk- all risk- all entrepreneurs share- share the same traits- similar traits at least. [Interviewer: mm] To take risks. Mediocrity kills creativity. Or creativity is what has made the world into what it is now. [Interviewer: mm] You know people like Da Vinci and… you know, um… Rumi and a load- a load of things, just lots- there’s a load of people, you know. And I was seeing- they were seeing themselves seen as outcasts at one stage in their- in their respective little communities. [Interviewer: mm] But they stuck to their path and made something of themselves… not only changed themselves and their communities but aspects of the world. [Interviewer: mm] So yeah, fitting in is not always- yeah, fitting in is boring.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: No I think I’m- I feel I [unintelligible 19:00] enough.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. We’re gonna move onto the next one. Is it okay if I close the door? Because I’m gonna have to listen to this recording [unintelligible 19:07]

Interviewee: Yeah yeah yeah of course.

Interruption

Interviewer: Can we start by talking about what you’ve put next please?

Interviewee: Yeah. That one there, I’ve crossed it out, so I just kind of just elaborated there so um… [unintelligible 19:46] [interviewer: sure]. A quiet and hot African Savannah, a lone lion, cast away from the pride walks away into the sunset into a distant land. Now, this is an image… that I once see watching David Attenborough program about a lion- a young lion who… uh, who didn’t even challenge- necessarily challenge for to be the main- to be the top lion in that pride, but was seen as a threat from the alfa lion at the time and they had a fight, he was savagely beaten and then… because he was savagely beaten, he was cast away from the pride. And once cast away from the pride, the image was um him walking into the- into the Savannah, flat-top African trees surrounded him. Um he’s so injured and now very hungry, he couldn’t even hunt the wildebeests- and even the wildebeests surround him and the antelope and stuff like that knew he was so injured that they could just walk around him without him evening trying to pounce on him. Now I think this is an image… that resonates with a lot of young males of a certain age group. Uh, under the age of thirty-five. Uh… the feeling of being- when life gets you down, um… you’re beaten, and you’re licking your wounds, sometimes people add salt to your wounds and… you’ve got no one around you, no support system. And then the young lion sits underneath a tree and just thinks what to- what to do. Now he knows if he sits there long enough, he could die from his wounds, you know? [Interviewer: mm] So he must get up. You must get up, lick your wounds and start all over again. And this is a very powerful image for me because I feel like… I feel like this young lion on many occasions. I’ve had to start my life from scratch, you know- plenty- plenty of- uh… quite a few occasions. And it’s the same image that’s in my head, it’s the same image that’s seared into the back of my brain. Um… I associate myself with- with the traits of a lion, you know. The resilience and the hunger, the ambition… you know, the power and you know… but yeah. Like… it’s hard to be a lion in our current day society, you know. As a… uh… to- to- to be seen as a lion you see, lion’s seen as an aggressive, killing machine that should be feared. But rather than be feared it should just be respected. And seen all… you know. But yeah, that’s what that image represents to me. I don’t really have that much to elaborate about that. I just feel it’s… pretty much what I said, really self-explanatory, you know. [Interviewer: mm] Yeah.

Interviewer: So it sounds like what you’re saying is um… you know, you see yourself as that lion, [interviewee: mm] kind of having that ambition [interviewee: mm] and having that sort of hunger to go for more [interviewee: mm] and having uh things. And uh… and- but society kind of um… limits you in that way.

Interviewee: Limits you, yeah yeah yeah. Limits your creativity, limits the things you can do, limits your power and it’s… yeah, just- yeah. It does, definitely. Definitely, definitely. Hundred percent. Once hundred percent.

Interviewer: When you say society, tell me more about that.

Interviewee: I wouldn’t say just society, I would say um… I wouldn’t say just society. It could- it could easily- it could be your won- it could be your own community. It could be your own family. Could be your own friends. In- in- in… in my case society isn’t the problem. I’m saying… um my own community, to be honest. You know… yeah.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: Well at first it makes you feel a bit upset and… can’t grasp why- why those- those who are most closest to you uh… wanna hinder you like that. But then you- you realise that not everyone’s your friend and not everyone wants you to succeed… and to prosper. And once you realise that… it just becomes so much more easy to navigate around.

Interviewer: When you say they hinder you, [interviewee: mm] can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: Ah… just- that’s just- that’s just like everyone. People- they say- they say uh… have you ever heard of um idols become rivals? And uh… everybody wants you to do good but never better than them. [Interviewer: mm] And that’s- that exists. People are in competition. Human beings are naturally competitive. You know. To eat, to- to gather resources, it’s just within our nature. However um… and that’s uh… it’s still ingrained into us, you know, people want you to do good, but you need to look at if- someone’s reaction and look at them into the face. And when you tell them some- some good news and see how they react to that, and then you would see whether they’re rooting for you or whether they- they’re- they’re on the side lines really wanting you to fail and trip over and that marathon [interviewer: mhm] you know? Yeah.

Interviewer: And when you say, you know, there’s a lot of competition and- and- and rivalry and stuff and- and that’s the nature of us, can you tell me more?

Interviewee: Mm. Mm… mm… mm you don’t know the answer to that. It’s just how humans are like. We’re in competition with one another. It’s- it’s just- I don’t really have much to elaborate on that one.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel?

Interviewee: How does that make me feel?

Interviewer: Seeing the competition, the way you have- you have to compete…

Interviewee: Even more… even more hungrier… and determined. It’s cool. It’s actually good. No competition makes you fat and lazy and complacent. When you’ve got competition, you- you know, it’s like… it’s like kind of like ummm… being chased by a fire ball, you know. If you don’t- if you stop, you’re getting burnt. Carrying on and you’ll never get burnt. Gotta keep running. That’s what it is. The marathon continues.

Interviewer: Mm… is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: Oh, the last one? [Interviewer: no, no-] Oh,no no.

Interviewer: Um okay. We’ll move onto the next one.

Interviewee: Yup. This one here, it’s quite a funny one, ‘cause it doesn’t really bother me to much ‘cause it’s actually- I see the funny side to this now. Sitting on a tr- um- a Lond- on the underground tube, in London, amongst hundreds of others, and yet feeling like you’re the only one that exists. Quite funny. The irony of this one is uh… now I don’t know if you travelled on the tube that.. but the London underground system is… state of the art of the- state of the art it is… a very very lonely place. You could be surrounded by thousands and thousands and hundreds and hundreds of pe- at- pe- of people at one- at one given stage, but feel like you are the only person in the world. You look around to your left and your right and you see people on their kindles and their ebooks and their phones, listening to music, playing candy crush or whatever, yeah? No one interacts with one another, no one checks up on one another, which is- you know it’s quite even odd for even me to say that, because it- it’s not like I would turn around and ask the person so how was your day and what not. Y- I mean, tech- technically there’s nothing actually wrong with that actually, because I’ve been in society’s where their… public transportation, like places in Africa and Malaysia and what not… people ta- people are talking- someone will strike a conversation, people will get involved and now everyone’s talking to one another. I’ve been in certain places in Africa where people randomly stop to talk to you and compliment you on something and then you would have- strike a conversation and get to know that person. And even that person will probably invite you to- to get something to eat right there and then. Stuff like that, it doesn’t- it’s none- it doesn’t exist in London. Every- again, everyone’s in competition, everyone’s in this rat race, everyone’s in- everyone’s in distrust of one another. Nobody trusts one another. Bit of an- anyone that wants to strike up a conversation and talk to someone or does something from the goodness of their heart, their thinking you know what, there’s some sort of a- agenda, they want this, they want that, they’re trying to do this to me. There’s this fear, there’s this paranoia. That’s what’s created this- I think that the London underground, there’s just that treatment where the energy that runs through it is very extremely negative. Extremely negative. Everyone looks at each other in a funny way and it’s something- like for example, you have a day, I think um… a woman- I think the train jerked a little bit forward- a woman almost fell. She… had to almost break her fall by [unintelligible 29:18] a man and I think she dropped her phone and everyone in the train looks to stare at her to see- you know, something’s a bit odd- out of the ordinary has happened and you can see she’s become quite red and quite embarrassed. And the guy that’s looked at her just simply looks at her with disgust and then I just thought to myself this is so unnatural. So I picked up her phone for her and said are you okay? I said, you know what I’m getting off in two stops. I know you’re younger but just sit down, in it, ‘cause I know it’s a bit rough and bumpy. She sat down. And I said- I said don’t- don’t worry about him, he was probably just having a bad day, you know, probably has no social skills, you know? Um… and that- and that made her smile. Again, and it comes back to the point where you’re so easy- it’s easier to… it is easier to be kind to someone- kind to someone than it is to be bad to them. [Interviewer: hmm] So yeah, the London underground’s a very fucked up place, sorry mind my profanity, but it’s really fucked. Uh… it’s- I try to avoid it at all costs to be honest. I’d rather walk or even cycle to the places, honest to god, especially these summer months now, ‘cause it’s- it’s hot as fuck. [Interviewer: mm] Um… yeah.

Interviewer: When you mentioned that you could be, you know, around thousands of people [interviewee: yeah] and still feel lonely, [interviewee: yeah] tell me-

Interviewee: It’s the truth [interviewer: more about that] because you’re… it’s- it’s- it’s in it- it’s in- it’s in that image. You’re round- you’re round- how does that make sense? You’re round thousands and thousands of people but yet you’re alone. You’re- you’re alone, you know? You’re by yourself. Just… it’s… it’s mad. Every other place in the world that I’ve been to, when I’m round that amount of people, they’re either doing the same things that I’m trying to do, or going to the same place that I’m trying to go to. Like for example Eid. Eid prayers. When there’s hundreds of people walking to the Mosque, they’re all doing the same things you’re doing. You can talk to someone. [Interviewer: mm] Um… like, it’s crazy. I think the only time when you’re around hundreds and thousands of people here- to be at a festival, and you’re doing the same thing as other people. Now if there’s alcohol and drugs and shit like that involved, then everyone’s just all chatty-patty and… yeah, you know. But when people are sober [laughs]… but you know what that’s like, in it. It’s awkward.

Interviewer: So it sounds like- mhm- so it sounds like what you’re saying is… if you’re surrounded by so many people but you don’t have anything in common with them, you’re not doing the same thing as them [interviewee: mm] then… that can lead to feeling lonely.

Interviewee: It… that- not- not necessarily. Like, ‘cause I- to be honest, I don’t give a shit. Like to be honest. Every- everyone has their own… when you’re going on- when you’re going on the train, you’re going somewhere. You’re going out to meet someone, you’re going to [unintelligible 32:07] and what not. But you- you’re taking the tube system where… you’re- you’re ride- it’s literally silent at times. If you look around you can close your eyes, sometimes you think you’re by yourself. You look up and there’s actually a train full of people. You know. Train full of people. You’ve just been herded or shuttled or [unintelligible 32:26] from place to place to place to place. And just look at how civilisations were… long time ago when people were travelling. People would stop to- to talk to the travellers. People would offer water. People offer food. Sit down, what you doing, how are you. Learn from one another. But… now every- every day’s- everyone’s just two busy. You know.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: To be honest, I mean, it makes me feel a little bit- little bit sad and a little bit upset and lonely. But to be honest I don’t- I think I’m just so… conditioned to that aspect. You’re just- I just truly have this I don’t give a shit mentality. Do your thi- do your thing… it’s… not really bothered by it no more. Yeah.

Interviewer: And earlier you said rat-racing. [Interviewee: right] There’s a rat racing environment.

Interviewee: The rat race. Yeah that’s- that’s- [interviewer: tell me more] that’s what the world is, it’s the rat race. Chasing money, chasing- chasing this world. The rat race. Put rats in a race to, you know, get the cheese. They dodge- forever try to chase the cheese, you know, and once the cheese finishes, they need to go get more. They’re- they’re just stuck in a race. It’s never ended, is it?

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: I’m not part- I’m… I’m- I wanna say I’m not part of it, ‘casue I am to a degree, but I’m… waking up from it and I’m not chasing it completely as much as I wanted to before. That’s- that’s the truth. I’m seeing things for what they truly are. And it’s quite- it’s quite empowering. It’s quite- I think it’s quite calming… [interviewer: mm] when you see things for what they are. Yeah.

Interviewer: Um maybe I should ask this question like this, how do you feel about, you know, that you’re in this rat racing environment. Maybe you’re not participating in it but how do you feel about it, that- how do you feel about it being there? And that people are kind of in- fallen into that rat racing-

Interviewee: I mean, to be honest, like everyone in civilisation, people fall into many traps from people that engineered society. Socially engineered it. But there are… there are… times we always live under tyranny and what not but do you know what it is, I pray for better days. I just pray for better days to be honest. I’m hopeful like that. I’m hopeful- call me naïve but… I’m just hopeful. I’m not- I’m not really pessimistic, I’m quite optimistic actually. Very optimistic. All things… are the way they are now because that’s what it is right now. Things change in a day. And I’ve seen that. Things change in a day. I was homeless, I was broke, I’ve been up, I’ve been down. Things change in a day. You know. Same way I’m hungry now, one hour later I could be- my belly could be full. You know, same way my hair’s all out now, next minute I could cut it all off. You know things [interviewee clicks his fingers] change like that.

Interviewer: Um, and how do you feel about things changing [interviewer clicks] like that?

Interviewee: Just the way life is. It’s- it’s- it’s- it’s cool like that. It doesn’t really [unintelligible 35:59]. It’s- it’s natural- it’s like asking me how do I feel about breathing. It’s- it’s as natural as that. [Interviewer: hmm] Just as natural.

Interviewer: And when you say you pray for a better world, you know, what do you mean when you say better world?

Interviewee: Uh a better world where there’s- there’s ju- just- there’s justice. There’s justice. There’s justice and there’s ex- there’s justice and… and um… people can live much more organically. And holistically. No- not to be- feel- be made feel- to feel like a statistic. When education becomes free. When you’re not charged for education. Knowledge is for- knowledge should be for free. Like our great universities that existed in Constanople, in Bagdad and Cordem and Spain [around 36:50?!?!?]. How education was free. Now it’s a business. I wish education was free. Wish people were allowed to live off their own land, grow their own food. And… you know… decide their own futures. Decide the way they wanna live.

Interviewer: When you said organically and holistically, [interviewee: mm] tell me more about that.

Interviewee: Organically- the organic way human beings exist is not to exist in cities. Not cities, not at all. No. Live off your own land. Grow your own food. Farm your own animals. Trade. Trade, you know, trading… we should go back to trading. Not using paper money, but trading. For example I have silk, you have spices, I give you silk and your spice- and your spices. It’s an eye for an eye. You have something that I want, and you- I- and I have something that you want. That’s fair. That’s- that’s- that’s what real fair trade is, you know. But yeah.

Interviewer: How is it now?

Interviewee: You know it’s exact- you know- you know exactly what it’s like now. It’s not- it’s… it’s a weird question to ask me. You know exactly what it’s like now. We don’t trade, we use paper money. We use bonds, we use things that have no worth or value. [Unintelligible 38:24] supress you human beings. And to enslave us. So long as we chase money, we’re enslaved. So… slavery’s just evolved. [Unintelligible 38:41]

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel?

Interviewee: It is what it is. It is what it is. Till someone wants to change it. [Unintelligible 39:01] I’m not a revolutionary, I’m not- I’m not gonna try and change the world or anything like that. I’m just- I’m just calling for it what it is. This is exactly what it is. Just gotta deal with it really. Yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you wanted to say about that box?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: ‘Kay. So um… can we… we ideally wanted four. Um- it’s okay- I mean ideally. But um, can you think of something else for this box?

Interviewee: The hard- there’s just no other image that I can think of in my head.

Interviewer: Okay. No worries. So we’ll move onto the next one. Let me just cancel this- actually we don’t need to cancel it for anything, we can just go straight to the next one.

Part 2:

Interviewer: Okay so can we start by talking about what you’ve put in the first box please.

Interviewee: So they estate where I- I grew up on. The reason being is that most of my good and bad times um took place there. It’s where I feel the most connected and most valued. Um… the estate that I grew up on… toh, many of my memories- funny enough, m- many of my memories actually were at a time they were happening were actually quite negative and quite crazy, but when I think back on it it’s actually really really funny. Like I- I wouldn’t trade my childhood with anybody in the world, not one person, I wouldn’t trade it for a young rich kid’s who had a really great upbringing or someone that went to Eaton or anything like that. I wouldn’t give a shit. If anything, I would hate to have the childhood of someone that was raised by Eatonian parents and stuff like that, with the restricted and sheltered background. They’re the ones that turned out really fucked and doing drugs and you know, just you know, come from really- and their- their families become really dysfunctional. Our family’s dysfunctional from the jump, so could- so we’re already at the bottom. The only- the only place we can go is up. Really and truly. So we start from the bottom, you can only go up, you know? They started from the top and then… it’s where… in it… so the estate I grew up on had a monumental effect on my upbringing because from a young age my- a lot of my life lessons, I learnt there. I went through a lot of things, uh… I’m not gonna go into it, ‘cause it’s quite personal. Um… but that there, that estate is where I feel the most um… uh valued, the most socially connected. Now… the place I feel most lonely-

Interviewer: Before we go on, can I just ask, when you say the estate, what do you mean estate?

Interviewee: Estate. It’s an estate. It’s a council state.

Interviewer: Council state.

Interviewee: Council state- council estates, man. [Interviewer: is it unintelligible 41:46] Council estate, big block, high rises with a little mini park in the middle and swings and a little river side right- right by the River Thames. You know, that’s where girls and guys used to hang out, get up to no good, you know, smoke weed, chill, play football, get police chases. Best childhood of my life and I loved it and I wish I- uh… you know sometimes you- it’s like you have this Peter Pan effect that you didn’t grow up, you know, that you just couldn’t- wouldn’t progress past fifteen or fourteen, you know. Life is so much more easy- that’ when uh money and all that bullshit- the world didn’t really matter, all that just mattered was your friends- so- you know, some- little bit of money to go to the shops to get some food and drinks and stuff like that. You know, good looking girl that likes you for who you are, you know. Getting chased by the police. Getting you know chased- getting chased by the crazy person on the estate. Just getting up to all round no good, to be honest. But you learn a lot of life lessons ‘cause you see what a struggle forward it is. You see what your parents are going through, see what other people’s parents are going through. It toughens you up. You are… it makes a man of you. That’s what a real- that’s what it’s like to be a real- to live in a real city you need- growing up on a council- inner city council estate, going to an inner-city school. Teaches you a lot of things. Teaches you a lot of things you would never learn in a school or in a work place, to be honest. That’s why- when you got- that’s why I see these are bullshit. Our curriculum vitae is bullhshit. Trying to tell you what the- there’s so much people that I know, yeah, that I grew up with, that can sell way better than- than a lot of these people that are- these stockbrokers. These stockbrokers are following courses how to sell. You don’t need to do a fucking course to s- learn how to sell a fucking pen. That’s a true- I know people that are- that have businesses. Illegal businesses, but at the age of twenty-one they were sitting on two, three hundred grand. That’s the truth. Who taught them how to sell. Did they go to Harvard business school? Or did they go to UCL or anything like that? No. All self-taught young entrepreneurs. And I- I- I- someone in my- a lot of them are actually doing really well for themselves now because they’ve applied the same skills. The way it is, what you learn in the streets and what you learn in poverty… you learn grit, you learn perseverance, you learn ambition, raw, raw animal ambition to succeed. ‘Cause you’re already at the bottom, you cannot fall any lower. The only way is the climbing up the mountain. There are many ways down the mountain, as you see in society, many ways to fall down the mountain. But there’s only one way to climb the mountain. There’s only one way to climb the mountain. So yeah. The estate that I grew up on, and the area that I grew up in, is the place I feel most socially connected because that there is like- it is like my mother, it is like my father, it’s like my grandparents, it’s like my girlfriend, it’s like my brother, it’s like my sister. I learnt, I bled on that estate, I cried on that estate, I’ve been happy on that estate. You know, that estate’s home to me. Housed me. You know, been there for me. I’ve sat on the swings there for hours, you know… yeah. That’s where I feel most socially connected.

Interviewer: And when you were in that sort of positive moment, or even sometimes when y- in that low, sad moments, [interviewee: yeah] um… okay sounded like- so what you’re saying is you had a lot of great time with your friends, the police chasing you, you know hanging out with a lot of friends and being around family, and at the same time those environments also helped you to grow. [Interviewee: yeah] Is that what you’re- is that what you’re saying?

Interviewee: Yeah they help you to grow. Yeah, definitely. Hundred percent. Definitely. Definitely. Definitely help you to grow.

Interviewer: And how- and- and- and… and how- and… I guess um… and how does that make you feel now, looking back?

Interviewee: To be honest, I still go back from time to time, just to go reflect. But it… it… well it’s sad is what it is. It’s ha- at the time it feels like the longest years of your life. You know, your childhood. They feel like the longest years of your life. The-

Interviewer: Feels like what?

Interviewee: The longest years of your life. [Unintelligible 46:26] you get to a certain age, you realise that it was so short. It was so short. It’s crazy. Honest to god, it’s so crazy. [Interviewer: hmm] Yeah, so crazy. Mm…

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Is there anything else you want to say about that? Okay. Can we start by talking about box two please?

Interviewee: Yeah. Uh, you know what, so place you feel most lonely, funny enough look- are places like clubs and bars or Shisha Land. The irony is that these places are places to feel socially connected and in fact it’s quite the opposite. You know, that’s so powerful for me. Um… before going out to clubs and bars, like uh… like I’d feel like I’m connecting with people, you get people’s numbers, you speak to people and stuff. But um… these days they’re actually quite lonely places to be at. Um… sorry I’m just gonna get some tissues…

Interruption

Interviewee: So yeah, so clubs, bars, Shisha Land is a- are lonely places because, once you start waking up to certain things and start seeing shit for what it is, you actually realise what the fuck am I doing here, you know? Um… like, they’re actually- everyone that’s there… are running away from their problems. So these places are not to feel socially connected. There are places of escapism. People are just running away from themselves or running away from their lives. And then they drink and then they do drugs and then ahh… it’s like, it just- I- it’s just- you know what it is, they’re almost like an asy- an- a um… asylum. Like a mental asylum. In- in a sense. ‘Cause you look around at the madness that happens and everyone’s dealings and their craziness that’s just coming out, and then they’re screaming and they’re shouting and they’re loud and they’re not themselves, you know. ‘Cause people like that- every single day when they’re sober at work or anything like that [unintelligible 49:36]. So… yeah. [Yawns] I could sleep. Um… yeah. So like I- I don’t- me personally I don’t go to these places no more, but when I started realising that- yeah… um… start feeling lonely in these types of places, I thought you know, oh… it’s crazy.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel? You know, that these environments are there and people go there and… how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Laugh about it actually now. It’s actually quite funny. ‘Cause they’re- they’re pictured to be these places of socialising. You can meet your girlfriend- your future girlfriend or your future wife or… can make new friends and maybe to a degree you possibly can… possibly. But if you overdo it… it’s like, you can overdo anything. If you overdo that environment, that scene, it’ll be bad for you, you know? So if we drink coffee… we get addicted. Smoke too much cigarettes, they say you get cancer. Um… [unintelligible 50:53].

Interviewer: You mentioned that these places are an escape.

Interviewee: Yeah escapism, isn’t it?

Interviewer: Tell me more.

Interviewee: That’s what escapism is, in it? It’s just- look, why d’you go to a club? Aw, I need to get out, I need to get out of the house. Need to get out, get out from what? What are you escaping? What are you running away from? What- how are you not content in your own household? You know? Go to these clubs for what reason. Oh, just to… you go to meet new people and do things and get out your fucking mind, to be honest. Drink, drink, drink to the point where you can sleep. Some people need to like drink alcohol so they can sleep. To silence their thoughts. It’s crazy, it’s the truth. People do drugs to silence their thoughts. But what you’re doing- is it’s just your- it’s like- I’ll give you an analogy. It’s like you have damp on your walls. Rather than dealing with the problem outright, paint over it. But after the coating comes off, the damp’s still there. The problem still remains. [Interviewer: mm] Mm.

Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: How I feel about that? Well… dunno really. It’s… it is what it is, isn’t it? It is what it is until it ain’t, then it ain’t. That’s how I look at it. People are mad, in it. People are mad. People do different things man. People are mad. People just wanna be happy but they’re just trying to different- they’re trying to do different things to be happy. Deep down inside they know [unintelligible 52:26] there’s this little voice that they don’t wanna listen to, this voice of reason. But then they- then they forget. They sat there… world restarts again, it’s like they’ve got amnesia and they go back and do the same thing all over again like Groundhog Day. Mm. And the other irony- the other ironic part is, the people that do this are actually- there are people in our society that are actually seen as very smart, like academic and uh… influential and seen as role models and yet they fall into the same trap. You know. When you know something is wrong for you, and you choose to do it, what does that make you? Does that make you a hypocrite, does that make you ignorant, what does that make you? What do you say?

Interviewer: Are you asking me?

Interviewee: Yeah, I’m asking you.

Interviewer: I guess it makes you… yeah, a hypocrite. Someone who… you know something isn’t good for you, yet you do it. [Interviewee: mhm] Hypocrite. Stupid.

Interviewee: I have another question. You have- for instance now, you… are feeling lonely, you feel upset, you feel angry… yet you are trying- for example you are trying to escape. So you use- so you use- you use drugs or alcohol, or any of these type of things now, but yet you know it is bad for you. Yet you do it constantly- over- again and again and again, see if you can get a different result. What does that make you?

Interviewer: Makes you… weak. [Interviewee: does that-] Makes you sleep. Yeah sleep.

Interviewee: Mm. Not insane?

Interviewer: I don’t know. But let’s keep it back to you. Then we’ll talk about it after the interview if you like. Um… okay. So, what you’re saying is uh, people continue doing the same thing over and over, [interviewee: yeah] um… and- and- and- and… and they seem to want different results, so they seem to seek happiness.

Interviewee: Mm. That’s what I’m saying.

Interviewer: Mm. How do- how do you feel about that?

Interviewee: Don’t really care. That’s the truth. Don’t really care if- for other people’s mistakes like that. That’s…

Interviewer: When you say you used to go clubbing, [interviewee: yeah] and-

Interviewee: Yeah. That was then, in it really. I don’t really- like really have an opinion now, to be honest, with all due respect. I don’t have an opinion on it now. That’s- that was then, you know. When I think of it now… bit of silly of me, you know. But then again, everyone get- can get caught up in that trap. [Interviewer: mm] I don’t really care about it, I don’t really care about clubs or bars or a lot of these types of places any more. I mean of course, like I could- not to say that I wouldn’t hang out in one. That’s not- that’s not what I’m saying. I would happily hang out in one. Um but what I choose to do in there is different. You know. I won’t spend as long uh… as I used to before. [Interviewer: hmm] Or anything like that. Um.

Interviewer: When you went clubbing and so on, in bars and clubs, [interviewee: mm] um… it… it seems like you felt lonely when you were there.

Interviewee: Sometimes. Now all the time. I’ll be real with you. Not all the time. Like, I did- have gone out with some good people, you know. Close friends and what not. I’ve had some great nights in clubs, I can’t lie. [Unintelligible 56:11] lie to you. But there are times when you just sit there and think oh yeah, you feel a little bit lonely, little bit empty. [Unintelligible 56:19]. Mm.

Interviewer: When you said empty, can you tell me more about that?

Interviewee: I don’t really know really bro. Don’t really know. Just… just get that little feeling of oh I’m just lonesome little bit. Feel a bit empty [unintelligible 56:37] what am I doing here, I wanna do something else. So that’s when you know you got… when you’re, you know like, shouldn’t really be here right now. There’s no need- you went out for the sake of going out. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there anything else you wanted to say?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Interviewee: You’re welcome.

Interviewer: Let me just pause the recording.