“This is Water” Analysis

Read the speech “This is Water” by David Foster Wallace. Answer the following questions making point-form notes. Bring your notes to the next class.

1. Structure: What observations can you make about the overall structure of the speech? Consider elements like:
2. length
3. repetition – give examples of words or ideas that are repeated
4. metaphor – provide examples and comment on their effectiveness
5. allegory – provide an example and comment on its effectiveness
6. anything else you observe
7. Language: How would you describe the level of language that Wallace uses throughout the speech? Is it well-chosen considering his audience (recent university grads)? Provide examples in the form of quotes to support your opinion.
8. Form: Discuss the hypothetical story (the one about driving to the store) at the center of this piece. What choices does he make as a writer in his telling of the story? Think of tone, diction (word choice), imagery, etc.)

What is the desired effect?

1. Content: Why does Wallace feel spiritual worship will not let you down like all other kinds of worship? What other kinds of worship does he provide as examples?
2. Content: Do you agree with his assessment that this speech is “the truth with a lot of rhetorical bullshit pared away”?
3. Content: The title is “This is Water”. What is “this”?