

Since April of 2020, I have, more or less, stayed inside of a small, poorly maintained one-bedroom apartment, adjacent to very little of social or economic consequence besides my workplace. My activities have primarily consisted of working from home, remote education towards finishing my Undergraduate degree, independent projects and study, and consuming a combination of long-form literature and short-form internet media. It is strange to note that, not including work meetings or the occasional calls with parents, I have spent almost the entirety of every day verbally silent, with the vast majority of my communication being via direct messaging and written text. With the exception of a two week stay in a friend's apartment, a few days spent with relatives, and the very rare trip into the office, I have been wholly socially isolated.

I do not ascribe this entirely to the Coronavirus pandemic, as my natural state has always been somewhat inclined towards isolation. Historically, when attending college in person, and summer camps and the like, I've always stayed in whatever constitutes my quarters at all times when in-person activities were not mandated - and often when they were, too. I have also never learned to drive nor had a car, and this has represented a limitation on my ability to participate in in-person activities. But properly living on my own, with a total absence of in-person obligations, has raised this to a new level.

I feel, almost, like I have been a sort of ascetic. I have no real furniture besides a large desk and a mattress directly on the floor, and no material belongings besides my computer, my phone, a bicycle intended entirely for commuting, a quite limited set of cookware, a loose pile of clothing, a slowly growing collection of necessary technological doodads, and a more quickly growing collection of books. That is a more or less complete accounting. While I certainly spend more money on food and less time cooking than I ought to, I am ordering in cheap fried food, not steak or lobster.

I woke up to a burglar in my apartment at one point, who I deduced had been there for several hours based on the timing of an email alerting me to their attempts to use one of my credit cards. Investigating after they had fled, all they had taken was the paper money from my wallet - including a very sentimental \$10 CAD bill - and a bicycle pump. I suspect they had found nothing else worth stealing.

Perhaps it's not so odd, then, that I feel almost like I have been in a prolonged state of ascetic meditation. In the absence of people to speak to or activities to occupy myself with, I have spent the time very much alone with my thoughts. I believe that I have made significant progress in coming to understand myself, making peace with some aspects of my corner of the world and my place in it.

Envy is exacerbated by exposure to that which we are envious of, and in the absence of exposure, I have spent less time feeling envious. Contempt, too, has also slipped from my grasp, as I have felt few personal wrongings, and all that I am left with is some notion that how someone appears to me is just a pale facsimile of their internal life. Not that I must forgive perceived transgressions, but that they are merely some physical phenomena, like water flowing under a bridge, simply to be comprehended and stepped past and over.

I'll be moving for a new job, soon, to a place more friendly to cyclists and pedestrians, with better public transport and required in-person work. This asceticism must soon be forfeited, and rightly comes the time to rejoin society. Yet it is my feeling that I have gained some level of insight into things, maybe even wisdom, that might otherwise have evaded me had I spent more time concerned with people and possessions. But I could really use a hug.