I think too much,

I think I'm too judgmental. Over the past year, having internalized some of the self-improvement, personal capital way of thinking, I started to look down on people who weren't going for interesting careers, didn't go on crazy adventures, or weren't contributing to good causes. Don't these people want to be known for something? Don't they want to be respected by their peers? Or highly skilled in something that brings joy and adds value to society? Maybe they don't think about where their lives are going; maybe they have already given up.

Too much of myself.

You can tell judgement thoughts dehumanize by following where they want to go. Someone wanting to work hard to save money for a nice car? A gullible child, stuck in a previous stage of evolution distant in my rearview mirror. Someone wanting to get high with their friends while watching Spongebob? Too lazy to put in effort to do something stimulating, reducing their dignity by altering their brain to accept lower standards for what constitutes a good time. The idea that someone could spend a significant amount of time watching TV, or on social media, and not feel like they are wasting their life, is absurd. Without a doubt, I would respect someone less if I found out they scrolled mindlessly on TikTok for hours, or even minutes for that matter. They're sheeple, unaware that they are wasting their time and reducing their worth as humans as they willingly give up their attention to haha-funny cat videos, inflammatory social media posts, and Netflix dramas.

And *of course,* I am so much better than them. Not because of how smart I am, and not because of skills I have, but because of the life I am trying to live. I watch videos on politics, science, and history; they waste their time on reality shows and twitch streams. Now, does this mean that I'm extremely pleased with myself, happy with how my life is going, and proud of the person that I am? Am I relieved to be soaring high above the riffraff?

Too much about myself.

No. I'm not. Because my judgement of others is inseparably bound with judgement of myself. It magnifies the disgust I feel when I succumb to those attention-stealing algorithms and wake up from a guided coma, courtesy of YouTube recommendations wondering who stole the last two hours from me. I stole it from myself, I say. It's *my* fault. I feel the onset of regret and anguish, but quickly dispel them with a stoic sentiment. "The past is the past," so I can only aim to do better next time. Aha, tomorrow will be different! …but alas, only in name. It goes by much the same.

Too much within myself.

Can't I want to improve myself without thinking too much about other people? And without thinking less of them when I do?

Does healthy ambition balance impossibly on the tip of a needle? Can't I read, learn, teach, discover, and invent for their own sake, like my interview answers and essays claim? Did innate curiosity leave me, or did I leave it, seduced by envy?

There I go again, blaming abstract ideas for overpowering me. But I can't charge them with breaking-and-entering because I tossed them the housekeys.

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The real me is in there, I think. Somewhere within myself. I just have to find him and let him know we meant to stop playing hide-and-seek months ago.