

Technological Solitude

Seclusion. Even the ironically named “social media” has secluded us as individuals. From what I’ve found with most forms of technology, it’s a way of isolating ourselves and beginning an entirely new persona outside of ourselves. Sure, there is technology that helps connect the world, but when referring to personal use technology that we use on a daily that is not related to survival can be very isolating. People live on social media, but who is that person they have created? They post photos in succession about vacations they have taken, and their life looks like a glamorous jet setting globe trotter that loves to explore the world and does so often, but their real life shows that these vacations have years between them. These people’s real lives mainly consist of boring everyday tasks and often the persona that this person has created online is closer to a stranger than it is to their true self. Where is the photo of this person brushing their teeth? Where is the photo of this individual going to the dentist? Where’s the emotions this person felt as they received their medical bill feeling hopeless because they cannot pay it. Everyone online looks so happy as they are standing on that mountain in the Philippines. How did they feel when they sprained their ankle half way up that mountain but really wanted to make it to the peak? Did they do it for themselves and to a sense of accomplishment or did they just really want to take that photo for Instagram?

There are so many aspects of an adult’s everyday life that no one talks about, but that we all experience. Why isn’t that documented? I don’t see what there is to gain by creating an online identity and living more through it than living in the real world where there is so much more to experience. When I think of online identities, I think of orange soda. There were teams of people with countless chemicals who spent far too long trying to come up with a blend of something that hardly remotely tastes like an actual orange. You know what tastes like an orange? Oranges taste like oranges, which are easier to get, are healthier, and taste better than “orange” soda. Equated to online identities, people work so hard and for so long to create an online persona in the hopes of finding happiness when all they have to do is go outside and actually live that life that they pretend to have online. The happiest people I know are people who don’t feel the need to document their lives for the purposes of the “been there, done that” intention and just live the life they are attracted to instead.

Ψ

I found music at the age of 2. My mother had formed a garage band and I would watch them play every Wednesday night in the living room for their rehearsal and I remember being really interested in what the drummer was doing. Until about the age of 9, I was very reserved. I enjoyed keeping to myself and, with members of my family being loud, pushy and opinionated, it was easy for me to slip into the background with my books and doodles. The only way that I would enjoy being in the spotlight was when I played the drums. This all started from me sitting with the drummer of my mother’s garage band. I remember that I was reserved not out of any public fear, but more because I didn’t feel as if I had much in common with other people my age. I spent most of my time, until I entered primary school, with adults and had become very into playing the drums after all. The thing that originally brought me into the social life of school was

joining in band in the 4th grade. “Finally, here’s an opportunity for me to connect with people who were also interested in the same things that I am interested in!” I thought. I didn’t find what I was looking, unfortunately. Nearly all of the other children were only in band because their parents forced them into it. Oh well. I still enjoyed playing the music with other people. Once I switched schools, I found that there was a section of band that I could play a whole drum set with some people that were very talented! Jazz band was something you had to try out for and only the very best made it in. I was 11 at this time and had been playing the drums for about 9 years (4 years on my own drum set). This is where music really helped me connect with other people. I always had a core group of friends, but music helped me connect with new people in a way that I hadn’t connected with before. I have now been playing the drums for 26 years and it has led me places that I never thought I would go. Because I have been involved with music for so long, it has led me to make friendships that are deeper than any relationship I have formed without music. Music has also let me meet so many fantastic and even some famous people.

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I love snowboarding. There’s just something that gets me when I’m on a mountain strapped to a piece of wood. Snowboarding is so unique because it’s something that can be done alone, but with other people around. When I first started snowboarding, I was terrified. I would fly down the mountain, wishing I could slow down, but knowing I would end up falling and probably tumbling down the mountain. Terrifyingly fun, but it’s something that everyone goes through on their own while learning to ski or snowboard. I’m now much better at snowboarding, having done it for nearly 10 years, and I’ve found that everything I do with snowboarding, I’m alone in my mind, even though it’s in public. The exhilaration, terror, drive, sense of accomplishment, these are all things that everyone feels in their own mind and I cannot truly share, even though I’m always snowboarding with friends and they may be there at the time I’m feeling these things.

Ψ

It’s odd to feel how natural the pull is to reach for a camera when you see something that amazes you. People look to assign meaning to things they capture on camera as if to lend it some sort of credibility. With each photo we take, we search for the value of our reality and try to prove we were there or to make our memories mean something. We truly only live in those few moments that we actually choose to notice and carry with us throughout our lives with a vast majority of days being forgotten. People are drawn to capture significant events with photos in the hope that they will be able to hold onto these moments longer and more vividly, but these moments will get away in their own time. We see photos as something we can take with us through our life and relive our experiences over again. They’re a flatter version of the world that we can fit in our pocket on a small screen. In time, photos feel more real than the actual event in our life. It’s as if we’re all living more through these photos and we’re attempting halt the world or, at least, make it pause so we can take a photo, but the world stuck on play. Maybe these photos give us comfort as the years go by? We cannot take these moments with us, but we all try anyway. We may hope these photos are just to show off to our friends, but we all know it’s for

our own piece of mind. We cannot share the feeling we get with a memory. To everyone else, it's just a photo. It's only to you that the photo means something worth remembering, though that doesn't lessen the photos worth.

Ψ

Space may be the final frontier, but what's lost while we gain the cosmos? Rockets are getting more powerful, telescopes are seeing farther, and were moving to mars, but where are our neighbors? The universe has been around for billions of years, but mankind has never been lonelier than when we decided to look out into the darkness and find nothing looking back.

Ψ

There's a specific unease that sets over you when you leave something for the last time. When you get a new phone, did you feel like you were leaving a part of yourself behind despite upgrading your device? Going back through that phone months later, you realize that it's now a time machine of who you were at that time. That time machine is an abrupt end of who you were in that chapter. Think about the last time you moved where you live. Did you take one last look around that now empty apartment when all your belongings were moved out? Everything that made that apartment home has been removed except the walls. Walking through that place you loved so much and that had once been bustling with your life, now feels empty and abandoned. That place now barely resembles itself without your presence inhabiting it. They say you can never go home again, but I think that statement doesn't just refer to a childhood home. My opinion is that these places or items become familiar staples in our lives. These staples may not be cornerstones of our existence, but the mere memory of seeing them in familiar positions holds significance. Remember sitting on that couch with your dog while watching Breaking Bad? How about the frustration you felt with your roommate when they didn't refill the Britta for the 8473865738 time? I'm willing to bet you can feel that frustration even now. I'm also willing to bet that you feel a nostalgia induced sadness for the time spent with that roommate or that time with your dog as you take your last look around that empty apartment. Do you miss being around that person? Is that person still in your life? This place that you remember and the people you shared those memories with have long since moved on from that place, even if they're still on your life. These memories are yours alone to experience of that apartment because only you can experience them for yourself. This apartment will now become someone else's new home. A blank new page for them to write a chapter in their lives. Will they love that place as you did? I hope they do.

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We are connected to one another today more than any point before, yet there are still so many missed connections. People I may have lived just down the street from all my life, but I never crossed even once in the super market. We may have crossed each other online multiple times, but not enough to make a lasting impression. Our days must be filled with these near misses that are diverted by the smallest reasons. Accidental strangers kept apart by some freak happenstance. I wonder if she likes my strange taste in music. I wonder if he needs a friend right now. I often time find myself looking at a stranger in a crowd and wonder, if things had been

different, could we have been significant to one another. Instead, I am left being an extra in their life. I am that face in the crowd. Rewinding their day, they may have briefly notice my light on my apartment window in their background or perhaps they briefly saw me reading in Philz coffee downtown. I'll never hold a supporting role or in their life and I won't appear in their life but for a flash that probably went unnoticed. They won't realize that I'm living a life just as vivid and complex as theirs. It won't cross their mind that I have my own life with friends and family and that I have my own mistakes and ambitions in my world that they'll never see. Even the acquaintances that were merely passersby in my story seem to be stagnant in my memory. These people whom I haven't thought about in years and whom I have just imagined had always stayed that 8-year-old child when I knew them when I was also 8 or that they even ceased to exist when I stopped thinking about them all those years ago. Everyone has a story and so many people's story's may be harmonizing in so many ways at the same time, but no one is any the wiser to it simply because our paths haven't crossed at the right time. time? place? These are the constraints we face? These constraints are frustrating because they're so easily surpassed, but, at the same time, they're so dauntingly unbeatable. Even looking at the people I have in my life I find myself wondering how easy it would have been to not have this person in my life? How nearly did I miss this person? Will I someday look back on my life and realize that who I became, all that I have/have not done and everything that is important to me is because of random encounters that happened in my life with specific people?

Ψ

Photography has led to some amazing moments being captured. The world marveled and was present with Neil Armstrong when he first walked on the moon. A revolution rose with Martin Luther King jr. as his words were broadcast around the world. Photos can hold such meaning for people, but none mean more than photos of yourself or of loved ones. The trouble with these photos is that they can describe a life a little too accurately. Looking back at all the photos already taken, you can gauge all the experiences in your life that have already taken place which gives you clues as to which events that are still yet to come. You've already taken your first steps and had your first birthday. You had already nervous and scared on your first day of school. Your last day of school was captured in a photo that shows you as even more scared. Your 21st birthday has such a milestone but passed quite some time ago. You remember hitting that point in your life where your friends started having children of their own and, soon after, those friends even bought their own homes. At this point, you realize that the circle of life isn't a circle, but a spiral and you're already half way through, just in time to feel the spiral closing. Millions of eternities elapsed in those first few years of our lives. All we had to pass the time was too look out at the world we were brought into and to observe all around us at whatever the hell was happening. Now were left looking back while missing those we were once so close with and wishing we had that childlike sense of wonder to believe we would see them again when this is all over. Maybe we had it right when we were young, and we simply lost the truth as we got caught up in our strange and complicated lives. Maybe it's alright to see loved ones lost in these photographs and not look at life without them, but life with their memory.