

An addict turns to contemplation

By [Patrick Prag](#)

October 3, 2014

I staggered through my house that morning, knowing I was out of coffee. I took multiple trips around the house looking for my shoes, finally settled for outrageously large climbing boots, then took multiple trips looking for my keys. I finally jumped on my motorcycle—adrenaline is a good substitute for endorphins when you get older—and broke many laws getting to the local caffeine clinic. Upon arriving I had the sinking realization that my man-purse was not in my backpack.

At this point all my training as a contemplative was out the window. I was Jonesing as hard as I in the old days, coming off Oxy.

Back on the bike, more broken laws, and now I was in full addict mode. I was no longer going to be a slave to my addiction. I would slay it by upgrading my coffee system at home. Yes, that should do it. I strapped the large box to the back of my seat, and I was home in four minutes with my pre-ground Sumatra coffee, my new coffee maker...and two, yes two, parts of the machine missing from the box.

I became a contemplative to help me deal with my many addictions. Across the years and many attempts at healing, I have been addicted to sex, masturbation, pornography, alcohol, and painkillers, among other things. All of these were attempts to avoid being present to my feelings. Contemplation was a place I could finally turn and sit still long enough to let myself feel.

As is by now obvious, these days I manage at least some of my emotions with caffeine. As I write this my emotions are well managed, and my cup is more than half full with piping hot double-strong dark roast. Still, I have begun to be transformed—by contemplative practices, by my Benedictine community, and by my return again and again to silence and prayer.

If you look closely, you can still see parts of the addict in my life. My life as a Benedictine oblate is not a trendy lifestyle choice for me; it is a way of survival. Stopping; being present; feeling the pain, hurt, rejection, and joy in the day; learning to accept the space between love and shame, to be reunited in love to that place

where we all come from—this continence is the kind Aristotle would say is only born of habituation. And habitus is the only prophecy I now trust.

What are your own yearnings for an ethos that is worth practicing? Are you willing—like an addict on a mission—to let go of all else?