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Solitude, self and autonomy

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We argue that by thinking of solitude in terms of self-patterns, autonomy, and affordances we get a richer account of why solitude can be either liberating or imprisoning. Practices involving solitude, for better or for worse, will result in changes in the set of available affordances, and this will either increase or decrease the autonomy of the individual. Solitude that results from an involuntary isolation (e.g., solitary confinement) will often involve, not only a decrease in autonomy, but also a decrease in the number and qualities of affordances, and a disordering of the self-pattern. Solitude as a result of voluntary isolation also changes the field of affordances, but seemingly increases autonomy.