

Why New York is Special

Amongst the many theories that exist as to why New York City is special, I would like to think that mine, the one that will be presented here, is different. If only for the reason that it is correct. To set the well-known and indisputable background: the world's finest culture, art, theater, music, thought, business, nightlife, as well as exemplary compassion, tolerance, virtue, independence, achievement, love; among: the world's worst poverty, depravity, racism, intolerance, violence, vanity, gluttony, decadence. When I walk down the streets of New York, I see each of these in tiny examples ten times a minute. They mean nothing, however, by themselves. The former are just diversions and ways to flood your mind with endorphins; the latter, a by-product of the former.

I love Friday evenings. Already, coming home from work, I feel the settling of my mind. My emotions and intellect slowly melt into the city streets. My spirits rise along with my gaze to the tops of the tall apartment buildings. I try to avoid going out Friday nights; I cherish the time I spend alone, refocusing my priorities on those things that really matter – things I can find in New York. The evening is full of little errands: excursions down from the slightly whistling wind on my 33rd floor to the city streets of Midtown. Past the men cantering home in business suits, the women in the pleasingly short skirts and rarely elegant high heels, the homeless already congregating by the old, defunct Museum of Modern Art. I can feel the exact moment when the previous five days spent in front of computer screens, incessant clients, and routine coworker banter disappear in the sound of traffic for the next 60 hours.

New York then becomes my Bible, my Torah, my *religious text* that instructs me, by example, of how I should lead my life. In the hundreds of little interactions, comments, gestures, advertisements, store windows, pieces of litter, architectural elements, honking horns, and finally, my own actions, I find little stories that point out the good and the bad of life. How do I feel about the vanity that makes me desire that Armani suit in the window? How can I reconcile myself with the guilt I feel for walking past that homeless man and *averting my eyes*? If I am polite to passersby, will my example lead them to do the same? And is that a *sufficient* role for me to play as a member of society? It is particularly Friday night that I find the time to analyze these little stories and parables in smallest detail and to persuade myself that I remain on the road to virtue in *the only city where the best and the worst, the richest and poorest, the most beautiful and the ugliest of all things human coexist contiguously*.

It is my postulation that these are the same reasons why countless people feel their pull of New York. If Paris attracts by its intimate knowledge of the beauty of Life, New York does so because it knows Life's complexity and logic. For every human good, the complementary bad is at hand. Inspection is easy. Those that want to learn about themselves through the study of all aspects of Life embrace New York and make it their home. I think, for now, I do.