



Boredom

We spend our days running at the speed of light, rushing from one activity to another, from one constraint to another, since morning when we get up until evening when we collapse into our bed, leaving little room for inactivity and boredom. But is idleness really the root of all evil or the vacant space that gives new ideas room to birth?

When I was little, I remember feeling very regularly bored, when in-between games or activities, and spending long moments sitting on my grandparents' garden steps, my head in my hands, grumbling repeatedly "I don't know what to do...". My grandfather's trivial response to this state of affairs was generally always the same: "Take a hammer and smash your knuckles, it will keep you busy"... The old generation was playful.

However, despite the tempting proposition I systematically decided not to follow, I always ended up finding a new game idea which ultimately swallowed up the rest of my afternoon. The momentary emptiness never lasted and an idea would eventually emerge from it.

While observing my 11-year-old daughter a few days ago, I realized that her generation no longer got bored. Each time there is a shift in her day, instead of sitting down to think about what to do next, she grabs a screen - phone, console or tablet, it doesn't matter - and she goes into passive mode until the evening if no one, her father or I in this case, as the concerned responsible parents we try to be, stops her and urge her to go and live her non-virtual life in the real world. I think that figuratively, in terms of activity, screens are not far from my grandfather's hammer proposition in a brain-numbing version, not as painful obviously, at least in the short term.

I would like to be able to say that the phenomenon only concerns teenagers and that it stops or slows when reaching adulthood, however I clearly see around me the way people manage their time,



complaining that they never have enough to do what they want to but waste lavishly the precious one by scrolling on screens for hours. I am not exempt from this guilty pleasure but I enjoy every day the luck to be part of a generation which grew up without screens other than television because it has at least allowed me to escape this modern addiction.

Contrary to what my last statement suggests, I am not at all against the screens which are part of our lives, provide us with the greatest services, give us access to all the information we may need and are a source of very pleasant entertainments. As with agriculture, I am just in favor of rational use of them. If we are tired at the end of the day, a good Mario Kart or Candy Crush session or even some regular scrolling on social networks won't harm anyone, any more than a series binge-watching week-end. Likewise, the idea of banning children from screens before a certain age seems unrealistic and even unfair if they see their parents on screens all day long. If screens do not play the role of babysitter so that parents can have peace and their use is limited so that children spend more time playing to develop their imagination and being bored to stimulate their creativity, they are an entertainment and learning source like any other.

Back to boredom, if not pleasant at the time we experience it, this moment of diving into the abyssal void of our lives before the parachute opens, boredom is necessary for the hatching of new ideas - the opening of the said parachute which gives access to a breathtaking view and a broader perspective on our environment -, the ones we had not thought of before or even had not emerged yet from our fertile imagination. Boredom is not a little death, a punitive stop, but a breath of life, a call for fresh air, for dreams, for imaginative genius, the genius of creation. Even when we breathe, there is a microscopic pause between exhalation and inspiration, and vice versa, it is tiny but tangible if we pay attention to it. In this regard, I really like [Davidji's meditations](#) for he always concludes them with "Meet me in the gap", which means "I invite you to find me in this interval between two breaths", this suspended moment of "not yet".

What would have happened, in your opinion, if Thomas Edison, instead of devoting himself to his reflexions upon the invention of the incandescent light bulb, had spent his days scrolling on Facebook... We would all continue to light ourselves with candles, as absurd as this hypothesis is, of course.

Some time ago I heard someone say, in an interview, that ideas did not belong to anyone and that they were just proposed to people by the Universe for it needed certain ones to be implemented so that the smooth running of the cosmic orchestration could go on. If you don't like the idea proposed to you or you don't act upon it, the Universe will offer it to someone else who will be able to put it into action. It happened at least once to any of us to have an idea for an invention or a project that was difficult for us to act on at the time it came to us and to see it brought to life a few months or years later by someone else.

I really like the paradigm that we all have, via our imagination, access to this great melting pot of ideas, from the smallest to the most extravagant ones, out of which we can endlessly randomly pick ideas whenever we want to, or simply leave them flutter to us through requests from the Universe. But, in order to do this, we must make room in our lives for quiet times, these moments in-between



activities, these moments of boredom, so that the Universe can intervene and whisper to our idle ear all the new pleasures it has in store for us.

Haven't you noticed that new ideas often come to us when we're having a shower or just before going to sleep? Those quiet moments when our mind is not flooded with useless and noisy thoughts and our brain not hypnotized and freezed by scrolling images and information. We need to re-learn how to create these kinds of moments and develop them in our lives.

If we decide to become again masters of our lives and time, we can regularly decide to leave our screens in another room, or even turn them off, for twenty minutes each day and see what happens when we get bored, when we do nothing but being attentive to the world around us and to the air that moves in and out of our nose. I thus invite you all to regularly get bored to see what brilliant idea will come out of the lamp, as Mr. Edison would state it.