

On the move, preferably always.

Einstein once said: "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep our balance, we must keep moving."

What is our main joy, I was asking myself, that drives stability in life? Looking at my own situation (while sitting in the beloved 3.5 hours Thalys train from Amsterdam to Paris) I can see a clear constant factor that lights up my spark (or my day, at least). It is to keep moving, exploring, feeding the brain with new impressions and information. In this way, I won't get carried away by the little foolery of life.

A delay? Oh well, more time to look out of the window and clear the mind. A beer drinking man next to me or a crying baby? More reasons to plug my earphones in. As long as I won't forget my luggage while exiting the train, there isn't much that can do any harm.

It is true: travelling keeps the mind young, flexible, oriented and satisfied. Professor and social psychologist Ap Dijksterhuis even wrote a whole book about it: "Someone who doesn't travel, is crazy." He states that travelling can feel as a mental cleanse, to feel whole again, to restore back to the mindset of our ancestors: concentrated on the here and now, not worrying what is coming the next hour or day. Our hunting system nowadays is overwhelmed, too focused on personal achievements, while our compassionate behaviour towards ourselves and others is neglected. Most of the self help books on the shelves nowadays emphasize on the same: to reach a healthy state of mind, we should bring our focus back on the breathing or anything else that strengthen our focus. Even engaging in a new hobby can refresh the mind. I have been playing chess lately for example, an absolute catharsis after a long day of studying.

A couple of weeks before I went to Paris, I had a similar kind of train ride, but to Berlin this time. The travel time was around 6.5 hours. That seems for quite a while, but I actually enjoy the long stretch of traveling (and I was in good company). Seemingly, slowing things down can be real achievement. The body travels faster than the mind and it is the brain that is the processor of all events. In resting state, the brain consumes around 20 percent of the body's energy. It is with no surprise that the mind is in need of new oxygen, and traveling can be the producer of that.

I recall two weeks before Berlin, my friend and I were sharing a train carriage with a minister of the Government of India. We exchanged knowledge, Coca Colas and chai teas. We weren't obliged to do more than that, and the man was delighted to share his wisdom with us. He also wanted to know more about bike riding in Holland, and we expressed our admiration for living in hectic India. Sharing, magnifying one's mind, is an other great benefit of traveling. It keeps the spirit young, grounded, connected with the world around us. A train-ride is only one example of connecting and reaching small satisfaction, which most people seems to forget unfortunately. I personally move to find my balance, and I find my balance by moving. As Einstein also said: "life is not a race, but sometimes a dangerous track to run on." But we must try to find our balance while engaging in it. And for me, it is the body that's moving that keeps the mind stabilized, energetic and dynamic.

After all, I am thankful for all the bikes in Holland that keep us in balance.