

GOING AND GOING: A CONTEMPORARY SEARCH FOR MEANING

BY

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Submitted to the department of architecture in
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***GOING AND GOING:
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ABSTRACT

Meaning provides the individual with a sense of a purpose to live, being himself, and feeling at ease. Finding meaning on a daily basis is paramount. Yet, the search is constant since meaning is lost and regained persistently. Humans strive to find it, especially in the XXIst century. The high demands of productivity, and the repetitions or monotony of everyday living can cause this loss of meaning. Moreover, the accelerated pace of time and the overwhelming amount of information produced by telecommunication and computer technologies cause the loss, too. Considering the above problems, the questions they pose are: How and where to find meaning? Where can the technologized individual find a dose of it? This thesis aims to present the resolution of these questions through the chronological and epistemological trajectory of my own search for meaning. Also, this thesis presents a variety of cases in which the loss of, the search for, and the discovery of meaning happen in the context of contemporary life. Tracing the path for the meaningfulness of my art practice through the understanding of boredom, and my fascination of video games, as a medium, drove this work. My exploration towards meaning generated an intuitive, and subjective methodology that blended artistic and scientific methods (phenomenological, ethnographic, philosophical, psychological, analytical...) that rendered an unconventional series of sequential findings. These discoveries show that the search for meaning has the form of a mental journey or vacation to the worlds of the self. For example, daydreaming and dreaming are natural means to go on an excursion to our inner lands. In the modern world, meaningful mental expeditions can come about when learning or perfecting skills for play or sports, with the body or with the aid of technological tools (meaning is in action not in production). This work explains how driving real or virtual race cars transport drivers to inner locations where they spend quality time with themselves. I argue that these mediums perform as vehicles of self-exploration and self-reflection that bring about self-knowledge. Consequently, racing's particularity offers the experience of speed, which sets the conditions for the optimal mental state to find the self. This state provides a sense of time, freedom, and oneness that suspends the individual temporarily from mundane contemporary life: he finds himself in a dream with the eyes wide open and clear mind.

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*For my expert speed-daydreamer mom, Wilma
with pure love*

Thank you for making travel a priority in my life.

*“It was like I was in a tunnel... I was just going and going,
more and more and more and more.
I was way over the limit but still able to find even more.”*

AYRTON SENNA

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The American artist David Hammons cannot stand art. In a notable interview made in 1986, he said: “I can’t stand art actually. I’ve never, ever liked art, ever. I never took it in school,”¹ yet he made it. At that time, he sold snow balls and other things on the street. He recounted an occasion in which he was selling “stuff” there: “...some people asked me what I was doing and somebody said, ‘He ain’t got nothing better to do’. And I thought, I didn’t have anything else to do, that was the reason I was doing that.”² There might have been many other things he could have done instead of art. But, as artist Lynda Benglis once expressed: “The ability to contradict oneself is inherent in the nature of art.” I kind of can’t stand contemporary-art sometimes either, but I still make it and work in its institution. I do have many other things I would love to do instead. In fact, one of my dreams is to escape to a beach with light green water and white sand to sell ice cream and write poems. This is my utopic idea of an anarchic, non-conformist and joyful life for an artist.

I came to MIT because I was disinterested in contemporary-art, but mainly in producing it. I urgently wanted and needed to learn new things... different than art, understandably. I thought that studying in a scientific environment would do wonders to my practice and life, and it did. What I did not know is that I had come to search and ultimately find something I did not know I was looking for: meaning. Yes, meaning. Had I gone out of my mind? No, not really. I did not choose the subject. The subject chose me. It was inevitable.

Things began to fall into place by digital magic. In my drive to avoid contemporary-art at all costs, I ended up falling in love with video games while shopping for courses, in the first week of classes. Love at first course. Soon, a couple of (apparently) simple and basic questions got me busy: Why are video games so fascinating? Why do I love video games? What is their connection with my work, my art, my practice and myself? Why do people play video games? I wanted to understand, and this how all started. Little by little, as I read books, took courses, talked to people, attended lectures, played games, and did “stuff” (art) I began understanding “things”. One finding brought another, and more questions came forward. Are players escaping from reality, routine, repetition and work, like I do? And if they do, where do they go? In this manner, my research developed a sequential pattern similar to a peeling an onion. The initial question turned into another and directed to the study of a new subject. Then, the inquiry of the new topic and the resolution of the

¹ Jones, Kellie. *Eyeminded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print. P. 248

² Ibid. P. 254

new problem led to a subsequent new issue and theme, and so on, and so on. If I were to peel the conceptual onion of the subjects rendered in this investigation, it would go like this: video games, fascination, play, fun, boredom, *romantic boredom*, loss of meaning, routine, repetition, dreaming, daydreaming, dromomania, search for meaning, car racing video games, *Formula 1*, Ayrton Senna, speed, sports video games, skills, and sports. Metaphorically speaking, this trajectory of “understanding things” or finding meaning was a learning race on intangible vehicles through exuberant circuits and digital tracks, at ultra-fast speed and mental slow motion. I went through foggy states of mind, beautiful cloudy days, dreamy nights, sticky puddles, tricky spots, closed curves, but also long shiny cleared paths. At some points, I had romantic crashes and love crushes, conceptual explosions, engine failures, and considerable fuel loss. In many occasions, I took theoretical risks and made desperate maneuvers, but in the end, I witnessed daydreaming victories, master moments, and glory days. From the starting line to the chequered flag, understanding and learning just kept going and going, deeper and deeper... and faster and faster. Fortunately, my brakes never failed.

The current work is divided in two parts. First, the chronological trajectory and development of my research methodology (explained above). This part presents the subjects, questions, and issues, experiments, findings of the overall thesis. It has the character of a personal, subjective, intuitive, and artistic chronicle. It is called *The Method of Understanding*. This narrative will take the reader through my integral learning process of these two years of studies. It unfolds how I ended up discovering I had to search for meaning and the reasons why I lost it. Note that my thesis does not aim to define what meaning is, but to set the framework to explain how and where I found it. The chronicle also introduces the contents of the second part which consists in a series of objective, theoretical, and “more” scientific chapters. These theoretical documents supplement the first part. Methodologically speaking, these texts functioned as research tools that helped me convey what I mean by meaning. Not as a definition but as something that can be found within the self by searching. I establish that meaning provides the individual with a sense of a purpose to live, being himself, and feeling at ease. In this sense, my existentialist approach regards meaning as strictly subjective and personal. Only the individual knows what it is or what it means. For this reason, it cannot be defined nor prescribed. However, my aim is to expose metaphors for the search of it.

The biggest conceptual challenges my investigation posed were two: First, connecting and relating the subjects (mentioned above) and the findings rendered through their study. Second, recognizing —in order to explain—where and how I believe meaning can be found. As a solution, I used the body of materials of this investigation as magnifying glasses. These conceptual devices assisted me in reading between the lines, grasping and recognizing how and where the individual searches for meaning in contemporary life. Because meaning that cannot be seen but only recognized.

Besides regaining interest in my art practice this research aimed to specify my artistic discourse, set my theoretical framework, develop my own language, connect and merge my interests, diversify my practice, and re-define my identity as an artist. I was also searching for the XXIst century poet, the paradigm of the sensitive human being our globalized society needs: a model, a figure to admire, someone I could consider great in the full extent of the word.

Happily, I have achieved most of the mentioned aims, including regaining the joyfulness to make art (however, I am still somehow skeptical about contemporary-art). The details about my “new” art practice, and personal findings can be found in chapter 8: *Many findings and an Outcome*. In it, I expose thoroughly where I found the meaning of my art, and what I will do with it. Similarly, I found the poet in the figure of the Brazilian *Formula 1* racing driver: Ayrton Senna. Chapter 7 (section 3): *The Master of Meaning: Ayrton Senna, The Poet of Speed*, is dedicated to a wide introduction and study of his passion, introspective driving style, racing philosophy, and relationship with the technologies of his race machines. The general inquiry to the question of where humans can find doses of meaning is exposed throughout the second part of this thesis: chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Regarding the methodology of this *Contemporary Search for Meaning*, as one of my readers (a social scientist) described it: is unorthodox. It is a colorful mixture, an eclectic blend of artistic and scientific methods. It transparently mixes ethnographic, philosophical, hermeneutical, phenomenological, theoretical, deconstructive and analytical methods. Yet, this thesis’ general methodology is intuitive and subjective. The resources I consulted and compiled for this investigation were varied too. The reader will find a *mediography* grouped in a bibliography, a YouTubeography, and a videogameography. Of the long list of books, there are two that must be mentioned: *A Philosophy of Boredom* by Lars Svendsen, the “astute philosophical chronicler of boredom,” and *Boredom, A Lively History* by Peter Toohey. These authors’ theoretical investigations and their philosophical, historical, anthropological and phenomenological approaches on boredom will resonate throughout this thesis. On a subjective level, these authors have given me warm company, as both admit in their introductions, that they have suffered from boredom (what a relief! I was not the only one). Lars Svendsen meticulously opened my eyes and showed me the path for my artistic redemption. Thanks to his book, I principally learned that I was suffering from *romantic boredom*, and that boredom was a meaning withdrawal. Peter Toohey, in a pleasant and enlightening fashion, explained me the reasons why being bored is Ok., why it is beneficial for a healthy existence, and why I might have gotten it as a contagious Western affliction... I could not have quoted them less.

This search for meaning is contemporary for two reasons. Subjectively, it refers to my personal conflict with contemporary-art, the institution, the art world, and the type of art produced for it. Objectively, it refers to the present technological time in which the XXIst century networked, telecommunicated and computerized individual strives to reach the demands of a culture that focuses on high productivity.

Last, my final words to the reader in the form of a confession with a scent of pretension: I would love that this work finds a reader or two, who come back after their first encounter, because they think my methods, contents, search and learning process are fresh, useful, and informative. I hope my style is clear enough so that anyone can “understand” what I am trying to say here. This is my XXIst century wish.

2› METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the reader to the questions or issues behind this thesis, and to the problems that surged in their resolution. It also displays the general approach and specific techniques developed for this research. This is supplemented with the description of the criteria behind the selection of the bibliography, and the collection of written and audiovisual information. In tune with the nature of this thesis, this chapter includes the list of the courses I took at MIT that contributed directly to its advancement. Lastly, this section presents the conclusions drawn from the information gathered with this methodology.

To begin, the elaboration of this thesis posed some issues linked to the reasons why I decided to come to MIT. These motives are explained in the next chapter. One of the problems was relating the many subjects that “emerged” during the master’s studies. What was the connection between them? In linear order of appearance, these topics were: video games, play, fun, boredom, routine, creative cognition, dreaming, daydreaming, dromomania³, car racing games, *Formula 1*, speed, skills, and sports. Another puzzle referred to the difficulty of enfolding these discoveries in the bigger topics that underlied my Art, Culture and Technology research. These topics are: productivity, leisure, time use, pace of life, and the influence of technology in society. The biggest concern was to find the thesis’ subject matter, and to recognize and convey the core finding of this research. The hardest questions were: What did I discover and how do I explain it? Finally, it was no less conflictive to think (for a while) that the academic nature of a Master of Science’s thesis required the disengagement of the intuitive, subjective, introspective, and personal components from the objective investigation. Fortunately, my perception was erroneous. This conflict was later solved with the blending of artistic and scientific methods. Accordingly, I decided to divide this thesis in two parts. First, a subjective, intuitive, and introspective narrative of a trip through unexplored areas, titled as *Chronicle of Understanding*. Second, a series of theoretical chapters that constitute the body or argument of this thesis’ findings. Throughout both parts, the reader will find an “unorthodox” blending of artistic, philosophical, phenomenological, hermeneutical, psychological, analytical, ethnographic and theoretical methods.

Thanks to the nature of art as field of study and practice, this thesis’ overall methodology is subjective and ultimately intuitive. I followed what really interested me or called my curiosity. The approach of the method to understand and find “things” (or *Method of*

³ “Dromomania, also travelling fugue, is an uncontrollable psychological urge to wander. People with this condition spontaneously depart from their routine travel long distances and take up different identities and occupations. Months may pass before they return to their former identities. The term comes from the Greek: dromos (running) and mania (insanity)” “Dromomania.” *The Free Dictionary*. Farlex. Web. 06 May 2012. <<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/dromomania>>.

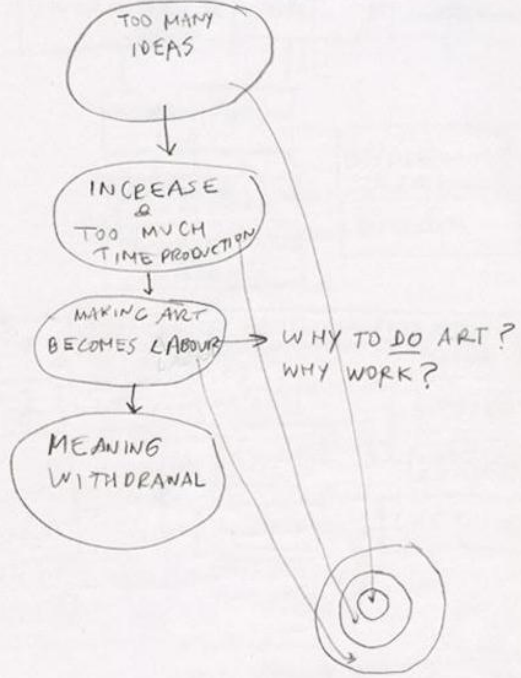
Understanding) followed a sequential pattern in which the discovery of a subject revealed a relevant feature that led to the exploration of another topic. This method described the sequence of the findings I made by “digging” and inquiring in the “found” subjects. This *modus operandi* also contained the ideas, notes, vocabulary, terminology, processes, systems of representation, and the outcomes rendered in my investigation. The *Method of Understanding* framed the research’s epistemological trajectory. The verbs describing this method were: listening (people and experts in the field), reading (books, texts, theories, papers, essays, news, articles), thinking (reflecting, “thinking of thinking” and daydreaming), observing (behavior, watching videos and video game experiences), playing (games, and video games), writing (papers and taking notes), talking, searching (on Internet, in my dreams), and making art (drawings, videos, performances, etc.).

Metaphorically speaking, the *Method of Understanding* is similar to the structure of an onion (see next page). I used this metaphor to render a representational technique that helped me connect and relate the several topics of study. For instance, the creative procedure consisted of drawing circular graphics – that looked like onion slices – with layers containing the topics of study. The position of a topic defined its importance in the research and its relationship with the other subjects. The closest to the onion’s core, the more pertinent or fundamental it was. In this manner, and developing similar techniques, I used art as a tool to deconstruct information conceptually and visually. Similarly, I considered some scientific methods for the investigation such as models for cognitive research, interviews, case-study tools and field work. I learned these research modes at MIT courses, and while working as a research assistant for a learning and video game scholar and social scientist at the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game lab.

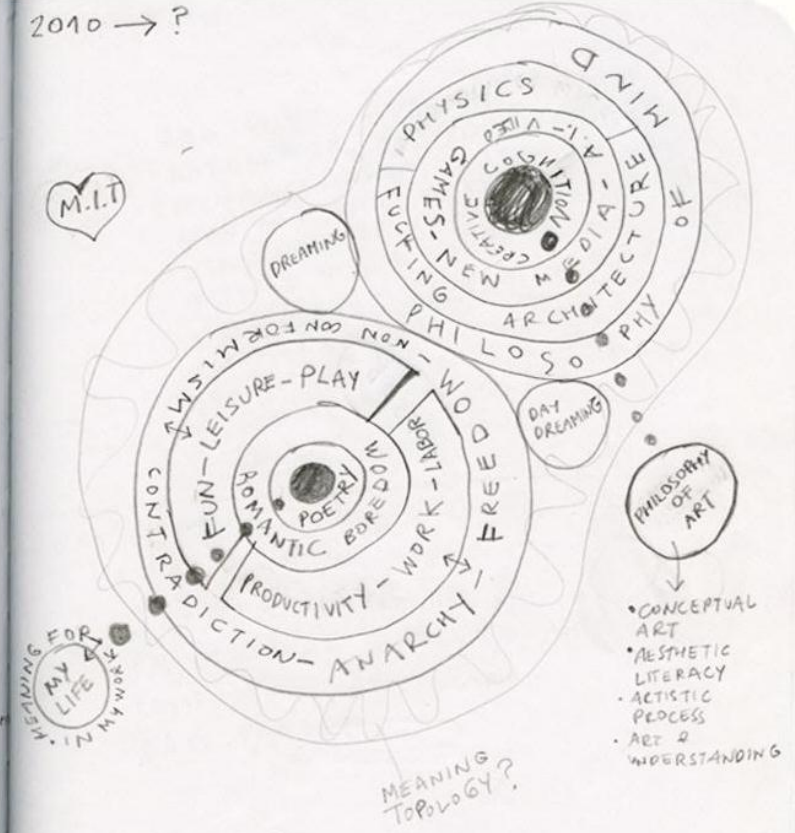
I selected the bibliography according to my general areas of interest which became evident as the investigation unrolled: media theory, video game and game design theory, philosophy of art, philosophy of learning, creative cognition, philosophy of mind, theory of play, philosophy of boredom, political economy, poetry, biology of conscious states, topology, and sports psychophysiology. I applied the same criterion for the courses I took at MIT: *Phantasmal Media: Theory and Practice*, *Introduction to Video Game Theory*, *Learning to Play and Playing to Learn*, *The Nature of Creativity*, *Video Games and Simulations for Education and Investigation*, *Social and Cultural Facets of Digital Games: Unpacking Sports Videogames*, and at Harvard: *Art and Understanding*, *Philosophy of Mind*, and *The Biology of Conscious States: Waking, Sleeping and Dreaming*.

The media sources (Internet: Google, YouTube, Netflix, Pandora) and the varied written and audiovisual material consulted during the research were video/computer games, videos, documentaries, films, video clips, blogs, forums, webpages, music stations and sound files.

MY ROMANTIC BOREDOM → THE PROBLEM



2010 → ?



IN THE SEARCH FOR THE FORM OF MEANING IN MY WORK FOR MY LIFE.

The language of this thesis aims to celebrate my fascination for video games, love for speed, and interest in studying bothering subjects such as boredom. Thus, this work points at being playful and creative while still remaining academic, technical, and serious. I will do my best to provide an immersive reading. The reader will find the use of metaphors, mostly visual, to deliver my ideas.

To conclude, I should mention that the *Method of Understanding* has helped me explain how my candid rookie fascination for video games as an art form, ended up in the study of Formula 1 (the sport), as a medium of self-exploration that brings about self-knowledge. It has also cleared my path to detect how the individuals find meaning (in doses) in the mental state caused by the experience of speed. Thanks to this overall research I have learn about and explored fields and subjects that were absolutely new to me, besides helping me unveil the core of my artistic conflict. Moreover, the information gathered and processed, and the writing done in these two years, has framed my artistic practice. In short, this thesis made me see the ways in which my exuberant trip made sense in the end.

PART I

*“I’ve always thought artists should concentrate on going against any kind of order,
never accepting any order not even their own...”*

DAVID HAMMONS

3› A CHRONICLE OF THE METHOD OF UNDERSTANDING: A ROMANTIC SEARCH FOR MEANING

“Because of a lack of satisfaction in the real world, man creates an imaginary world.”

Lars Svendsen

The purpose of this chapter is to break down the *Method of Understanding*⁴ in the form of a personal chronicle. It explains the reasons, doubts, difficulties, questions, findings, issues, and the trajectory of the investigation. Also, it structures my search for meaning in three phases: loss of meaning, search for meaning and the treatment for the loss... that enabled me to find it.

3.1.› THE ANTECEDENTS: A CONSISTENT LOSS OF MEANING

Since 2004, I experienced a progressive loss of interest in contemporary art, and a continuous failure to remain enthusiastic about my ideas once I had them –usually, in considerable number. This disinterest was caused by a conflicted relationship with some “fractions” of the art world, and having an inaccurate notion of what my artistic discourse was about. These two factors, combined with a sense of curiosity –about almost anything I perceived as “different” or “new”- made me change my mind constantly. The loss of meaning was manifested for the first time while doing an artist residency program at the *Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten*. Being accepted and receiving a two year research scholarship in one the best art academies in the world was a gift, a prize from life, and a dream come true, for all the work I did in Bolivia as a self-taught artist. I travelled to The Netherlands with a suitcase full of ambitions, plans, and projects. I wanted to produce, produce, produce. At that time, materializing my ideas just felt just urgent. Yet, by the end of the first year (2004) I had an art overdose, due to the insane amount of art I was confronted with (should I call this overdose as *art-boredom-of-surfeit*?⁵). I also got confused with how my work was perceived outside Bolivia. For all these reasons, I had my first artistic crisis.

⁴ This method corresponds to a phenomenological retrospective of a biographical learning process, according to my thesis reader and social scientist Konstantin Mitgutsch.

⁵ The concept of *boredom of surfeit* is explained later in this chapter. See page 35, or footnote 32.

In The Netherlands, every day of my life was art, art, art. I practically lived with fifty brilliant and talented artists in the academy, the advisors were great, the conversations were fulfilling, Amsterdam was beautiful, and the academy was golden. We visited uncountable exhibitions, in and outside the country. It was not my first time in Europe, so things were even more exciting as I visited places I went before. The entire experience felt incredible, and I was learning so much, except that I was no longer enthusiastic about my ideas (which are usually plentiful)... none was worth implementing. The ideas were exciting until I began thinking about producing them. I was artistically empty, in the void, with a mind full of ideas. Of course, I kept on working. The crisis never stopped me, but making art products did not make me happy anymore. I could not even complain because, on top of everything, I was exhibiting internationally and acquiring recognition, little by little.

However, for many reasons, soon I realized that the art world was not the candy I thought it was. Here, I want to talk about the most frustrating aspects of some of the exhibitions I was invited to in Europe. The problem was that my work was mostly put in the bag of “Latin American socio-political art”. Besides the fact that my work was not about socio-political-economical issues, several of these exhibitions portrayed an image of Latin America that was demeaning, patronizing or condescending. This image perpetuated the notion of the “third world” as a “poor”, troubled, unstable, or “underdeveloped” region. I declined many invitations. No regrets. From time to time, even in 2012, I still receive some invitations of this kind. Resisting and saying no to these kind of exhibitions has become a rule on my practice. In this respect the provocative artist David Hammons said: “If an artist doesn’t have his own rules then he’s playing with those of the art world, and you know those are stacked against you.”⁶ Undoubtedly, the aforementioned exhibitions have formed my understanding of some “fractions” of the art world. I believe perception works like a glass of water that is half full or half empty: half of what happens is real, and the other half is my imagination or the workings of my perception based in past experiences. Nonetheless, it is undisputable that there is a glass and a portion of water. Anyhow, I cannot deny that the art world has great things too. It allowed me to travel around the world, meet interesting people, and receive funding to live and continue working.

Another factor that might have contributed to the unfortunate loss of interest or urgency to make art was that I have never really enjoyed the process of production. The drive to see my ideas materialized pushed me to produce the works of art. But honestly, it was never the cherry of the cake, as it is for many artists I know (especially painters). I love brainstorming and to see the work in the material world, not making it. Is this too bad? Anyhow, there is one last possible reason that made things worse: I was not learning from my work anymore. I was still producing it but my methods, my processes, were stuck. I was using a smart formula I had developed in Bolivia to make effective art products. As a self-taught artist, I had learned to make mainstream art by devouring contemporary art

⁶ Jones, Kellie. *Eyeminded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print. P. 254

magazines. At the Rijksakademie, I realized that I was following a conventional pattern, and I knew how to do it right. But that was not me. Some of my advisors suggested that I continue making the same work because I had “talent”. They saw me as an ambitious artist. But, again, that was not me.

My crisis disappeared some months later as I made a 180 degree turn in my work. Now, I can say that I am proud of my crisis, for all the things I learned. It also made me grow up as an artist. But the void lasted longer. For several years, I could hear it whispering deep inside. It said: art has lost its meaning for you. Until one day, the solution that would foster transformation simply became evident. I began studying philosophy in 2009, to learn new things, to discover other worlds, and to regard my artistic conflict from a different perspective. In other words: I was probably looking for meaning although I was not conscious of the nature of my search. One of my favorite classes was “Introduction to the Philosophy of Science”. It opened my eyes to the world of science and technology. I loved it. This subject was a hint to apply to the Art, Culture and Technology program at MIT.

3.2.) A DESPERATE SEARCH FOR MEANING

So, I came to this scientific institution thirsty to learn new things, and thanks to an intense urge to travel to distant lands and unexplored dimensions. Problematic, complex, difficult, offensive (for pragmatic minds) and personal as it might be, my artistic loss of meaning or “meaning withdrawal”⁷ brought me to MIT. As opposed to confining me to an arid motionless spot, my void took me to an exciting learning trip through fantastic colorful worlds, digital challenges, deep and sticky dungeons, extensive foggy nothings, true love processes, daydreaming discoveries, nonconformist failures, romantic disasters, fascinating misunderstandings, conceptual risks, and dromomaniac encounters. This candid “search for meaning” turned into the conquest of understanding, which is a passage with no ending but a happy finish line: graduation. Below, the reader will find a chronicle of the *Method of Understanding* in chronological order (forgive the repetition).

⁷ “Meaninglessness is boring. And boredom can be described metaphorically as a meaning withdrawal. Boredom can be understood as a discomfort which communicates that the need for meaning is not being satisfied.” Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P.30

3.2.A.) VIDEO GAMES ENCOUNTER

"Video games are nerd poetry."

Ernest Adams

The afternoon I encountered video games for the second time in my life (the first one was in 1984, I was 9 years old) felt like a technological spell. Video games were not only a new medium and language to use but a huge fresh and autonomous realm to explore. While shopping for courses in my second week at MIT, I fell in love with video games. I attended a class where the students and the professor were playing a video game that struck me for its beauty and craziness. So, I took the class. I did not question my choice, regardless of the risks or difficulties studying an entirely new area posed me. Attending the undergraduate video game courses was either a cheerful nightmare or a scary challenge. My classmates were mainly true hard core geek American male video gamers who spoke fast and with words I could not understand. There were some girls too, equally committed to video games but evidently feeling much less intimidated than me. My only "hard core" gaming experience was playing the games that were available for the **ATARI** consoles in the 1980s. My video game skills could not be less fit, as I could not fit less with these crowds.

Yet, these things did not matter because I had found *Katamari Damacy*, and that was exciting. This game's plot is about a diminutive cute looking prince (the avatar) that comes to planet Earth on an important mission: to find enough material to rebuild the "glorious starry sky" that was destroyed accidentally by his father -the *King of All Cosmos*- on a drunken night. To achieve his goal, the Prince receives a colorful chewing gum ball that picks objects (candies, toys, furniture, buildings, and... people) smaller than its diameter. The ball is called *katamari*. In the gameplay, the prince (the player) rolls the *katamari* endlessly through the Earth. The ball grows -as it rolls- until it is big enough to become a star, a planet, or the moon. Sometimes, the prince runs against time. Sometimes, his task consists in rolling the *katamari* until it reaches a determined size. The ball loses things when it collides with obstacles (see next page). In terms of the game's content and plot, its text touched me in a special way. I found it poetic, playful, and light hearted at the same time. These are some of lines that appear in the intro-video and cutscenes.⁸ I cannot explain why, but I felt deeply related to them:

⁸ "Sequence in a video game over which the player has no or only limited control, breaking up the gameplay and used to advance the plot, strengthen the main character's development, introduces enemy characters, and provide background information, atmosphere, dialogue, and clues." "Cutscene." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 06 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cutscene>>.

“Good day for rolling, good day for living!”

“I’m a prince. I love vibration.”

“You are small as ever.”

“We felt the beauty of all things, and felt love for all... Now, there’s nothing but darkness.”



Katamari Damacy (published and developed by Namco for the PlayStation 2 video game console in 2004)

What most called my attention was that the cartoonish moving images were meant to be played. I could actually be part of that beautiful and amusing world. I already knew about video games, but that day it felt like a revelation. It felt like digital magic.

The somehow distant and untouchable *“exhibition”* format –I was used to working with- looked lame compared to this discovery. Simply exhibiting, showing, or displaying my art began to disappoint me several years ago, but for some stupid reason I continued doing it. [Excuse: Futile attempts to propose something “new” end up as sad “reinventions of the wheel” that discourage the artist so that “the same old thing” becomes a better option for her.] The least appealing feature of the *“exhibition”* format is that it demands the passive participation of the audience. Works of art perform as entities that mediate the communication between the artist and the spectator. The observer’s task consists in contemplating, observing, reading, or engaging mentally with the art object across a

physical distance. There is no direct interaction with the viewer. I have never been interested in making *participatory art*⁹ though. In my perception, it “imposes” or “forces” the audience to participate. I am not sure the drive behind participation is pure conviction. Of course, some spectators are truly into it. But, I believe most of the times participation is based in social pressure, pity, friendship, or solidarity. Hence, it puts the viewer in a position she might not be aware of, or that she might not share with the artist. This kind of art distills a scent of political correctness that makes it artificial. But this is my subjective notion. I tend to associate communal, relational, and social art practices to puritanism and double standards. Undoubtedly, there are real and urgent exceptions: activism is definitely one.

In video games, “there is no threshold. People don’t feel they have to step back.”¹⁰ “Audiences” engage with these games as they have a good time thanks to their interactive “fun” nature. Nevertheless, play is not only a source of fun, but a form of active engagement¹¹. The player is not a passive consumer; she is the protagonist of the world of the game. Sometimes, she is even an active producer¹² because the games come with tools to extend and continue creating their worlds. These tools are called *mods* or modifications¹³ with which the player “improves” the game. In addition, these interactive technologies leave enough space for the spectator to develop her individuality and skills¹⁴. As a result, I argue that play can bring about reflection, self-knowledge, and self-expression. Seldom “exhibition art” pieces trigger emotions strong enough to be manifested in the form of screams, shouts, sweating or cry. Not that “exhibition art” does not trigger retinal, cognitive, mental or even emotional reactions. It just draws a thick line that separates the spectator from the work. I find this too serious and restrained. In respect to exhibition art and audience, the American

⁹ “Artwork that is interactive and participatory may be referred to as “participatory art;” it may also be categorized under terms including relational art, social practice, community art, and new genre public art.” “Participatory Art.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 28 Jan. 2012. Web. 06 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_art>.

¹⁰ Klaus Biesenbach quoted in: Miranda, Carolina. *Let the Games Begin*. New York: Artnews magazine, issue April, 2011. Print. P.81

¹¹ Jenkins, Henry. *Confronting the challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Boston:MIT Press, 2009 Print. P.40

¹² Gee, James P. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003. Print. P.208

¹³ “Mods are made by the general public or a developer, and can be entirely new games in themselves (...) Mods that add new content to the underlying game are often called partial conversions, while mods that create an entirely new game are called total conversions and mods that fix bugs are called unofficial patches (...)Games running on a PC are often designed with change in mind, consequently allowing modern computer games to be modified by gamers without much difficulty (...) As early as the 1980s, computer game mods have also been used for the sole purpose of creating art, as opposed to an actual game. This can include recording in-game action as a movie, as well as attempting to reproduce real-life areas inside a game with no regard for game play value.”

“Mods” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 06 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mod_%28video_gaming%29>.

¹⁴ The word individuality in the full extension of the sense.

artist David Hammons asserted: “The art audience is the worst audience in the world. It’s overly educated, it’s conservative, it’s out to criticize not to understand, and it never has any fun.”¹⁵

The idea of producing a type of art that could give good moments or make people feel happy or excited was motivating and very tempting. On a similar respect, David Hammons said: “I think the movie people are more advanced than other visual artists. They can make you cry, they can make you laugh, they can scare you.”¹⁶ Sometimes, I think it is sad that a lot of quality contemporary-art is not enjoyed or cheered because of the nature of its quiet reception, or conceptual sophistication. Imagine a group of people cheering, clapping or expressing their views physically in front of art objects in museums or galleries. That would be fun to watch! However, the way art is consumed does not need to change. This is why video games are relevant as cultural products. They fill some gaps. Another hole they might fill is that they have the intrinsic ability to “teach” the audience how to play them. They have embedded learning tools that facilitate their consumption. Players learn to play the games as they play. Good video games are powerful learning tools.¹⁷ Just to clarify, I do not think that contemporary-art products should be “didactic” or less conceptually rigorous.

There is another argument that aims at challenging the idea of “traditional art:”¹⁸ video games do not need an exhibition space. Games are played in computers at home or in arcades, plus they can be played online. There are thousands of massive communities of players from all over the planet playing different games together on Internet while I write this paper. These are active users that do not need to leave home in order to have the experience. These users are “living” this form of art, not contemplating it only. Video games part of their lives, and intimacy. There is no doubt that this feature beats by far the exhibition format of “traditional art”.

I also felt interested and probably fascinated by the fact that video games keep the users’ attention for surprising periods of time. Besides their immersive qualities, I learned that video games had sensorial attributes of diverse intensities. They were not static visual entities that convey meaning or act like vehicles of representation. They activate the senses through bodily sensations: with the graphics, the motion, the sound and the controllers. Video games are experiential, for they demand constant attention: “The games are designed to give consequential feedback based on player input to the system, and that is why they become interesting wonders to explore.”¹⁹ These interactive technologies are challenging, visually attractive, and intensely appealing. Since players do not have any

¹⁵ Jones, Kellie. *Eyeminded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print. P. 255

¹⁶ Ibid. p.253

¹⁷ Gee, James P. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003. Print.

¹⁸ Term used by some New media artists to depict visual, conceptual, or contemporary-art practices. I heard it from one of my professors who is a New Media artist.

¹⁹ Konzack, Lars. “Philosophical Game Design” in *The Video Game Theory Reader2*. Ed. Perron, Bernard and Wolf, Mark J.P. NY: Routledge, 2009. Print. P.36

obligation to play, they do it whenever they wish for as long as they want. Play is the utmost free activity. It can potentially liberate the person from, work, preoccupation, routine, and transport her to a different place: a mental state, a mental journey to lands of herself.

I suppose that because video games captivated me entirely, most of the ACT faculty suggested me to be “critical” about them. From my perspective, their advice was like telling a couple of new lovers to focus on their defects at the beginning of their journey to get to know each other. Anyhow, my professors suggested me to consider violence in games, the use of video games for military purposes, their commercial market, or “kids playing too much”. I could sense the bias or sceptic perspective underlying those suggestions. It seemed that according to the art-discourse rhetorics, if one was to be taken seriously about video games one had to adopt a stereotypical “critical” stance towards them. I wanted understand video games deeply, and this is how I engaged critically with them. So, I wondered what it meant to have a generative, critical, and “profound” or authentic discourse. Unfortunately, my faculty’s feedback exemplifies how some fractions of the contemporary-art world regard video games. An article in the *Artnews* magazine titled *Let the Games Begin*²⁰ refers specifically to this issue in these terms: “Despite the art world’s decade-long embrace of the format, the discussion about the crossover between video games and art can become fraught, especially on the gamer side of the divide. Among some game theorists, there is a feeling that the contemporary-art world sees the video game as something to be deconstructed rather than an art form worth exploring in its own right.”²¹

3.2.B.› BOREDOM, A VERY, VERY BAD WORD

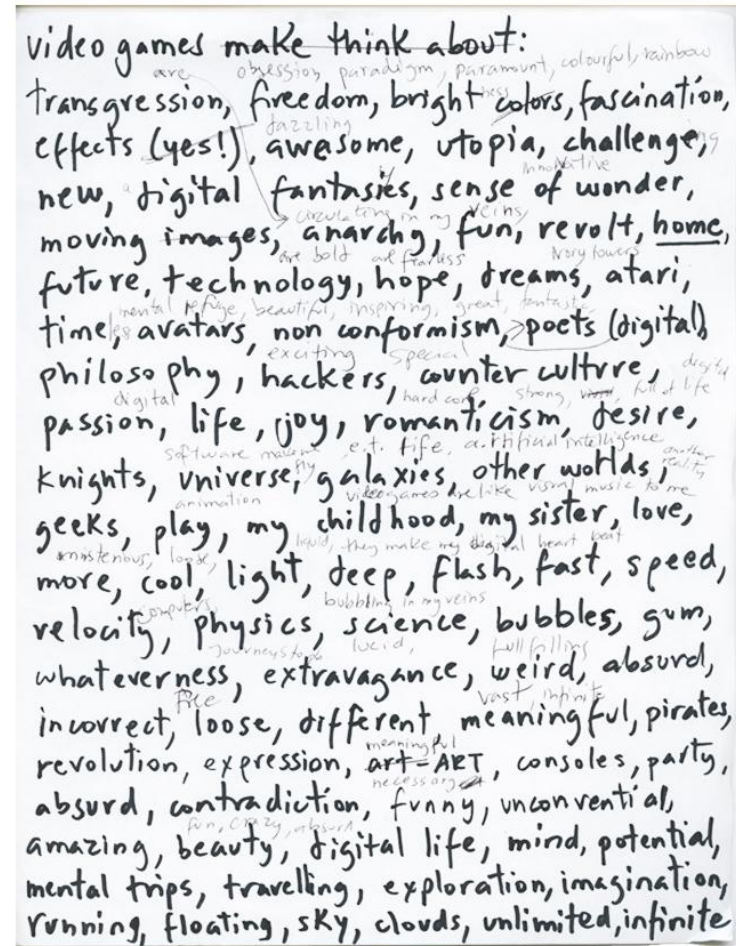
From the beginning of this research, I was concerned about clichés coming from bias. I wanted to avoid them, but most importantly, I wanted to find things my own way no matter how new video games were for me. To do so, I needed to understand my love for them. Yet, the language of video games was so new to me, and I was acquiring so much visual and written information that it was difficult to discern what really attracted me about video games. Besides the courses I was taking, every week I used to attend GAMBIT’s *Friday Games* presentations²². I was also playing games on my computer (I even bought a Play Station 2 console). For a while, I persistently asked myself why video games were so fascinating, and what linked them to my work. One of the methods I used to answer

²⁰ Miranda, Carolina. *Let the Games Begin*. New York: Artnews magazine, issue April, 2011. Print. P. 84

²¹ I hope this text provides with information for a wider and unbiased understanding of such a vast and complex semiotic domain.

²² At the *Singapore MIT GAMBIT Game Lab* researchers get together to play and talk about video games. Every week, a different subject or type of games is chosen. Address: 5 Cambridge Center, Cambridge, MA 02139.

this essential question consisted in writing words on a sheet of paper. So, I wrote all the words that came up to my mind evoked by video games as everything I like. The result was a page full of words but no answers. Nothing more than a good exercise to see my interests together. With the aim to continue exploring and understanding video games as an art form and medium, I deconstructed their entire semiotic domain in the distinct internal and external layers that compose it (in my perception). So, I developed a tentative taxonomy which also took me nowhere (see below).



INTERNAL ELEMENTS:

TECHNOLOGY

- software: programs, programming, codes, cheats, mods
- hardware: consoles, cartridges, interfaces, computers, hands free technology, GPS technology,

LANGUAGE

- visual effects, graphics, styles, colors

TYPES OF VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMES

- Casual: fast simple games, puzzle games, garage games, art games,
- Serious: educational, therapeutic , social issues
- Narrative: RPG, MMOs.
- Arcade
- Community games (Sims, Half- life, Facebook games, etc.) not really games

STRUCTURE

- gameplay, game mechanics, narrative, fictional worlds, rules, target group

HUMAN RESOURCES

- game designers, producers, artists, scholars and theoreticians
- types of players: explorers, winners, killers, socializers, and hardcore and casual gamers

INTERACTIVE NATURE

- relationship players-interface, controls, types of gamers
- theoretical aspects: game, play and learning theories, game design, types of players

EXTERNAL ELEMENTS:

- Industry
- Video game online resources: forums, tutorials, mods, youtube videos, websites, vlogs and gamer's blogs, download sites, applications and software.
- Online video game's communities
- Festivals, venues, etc.
- Demographics (relationship between age, games played and time spent in playing)
- Production of video games according to regions or countries (US, Japan, Asia, Europe, Scandinavia, Latin America)

Because I found no answers, I used the most basic or elemental strategy to explain my fascination. I searched its meaning on Internet, in the Webster's dictionary which defined it as "The act of bewitching, or enchanting; the exercise of a powerful or irresistible influence on the affections or passions; inexplicable influence."²³ Since the dictionary only described the feeling, I continued my exploration until I found a quote from Schopenhauer that said: "Boredom is just the reverse side of fascination: both depend on being outside rather than inside a situation, and one leads to the other."²⁴ Schopenhauer's quote proved to be ultimately useful because boredom is the opposite of fun, too.

Fascination, boredom and fun are deeply interwoven in play. According to diverse play theories fun is a fundamental and intrinsic feature of video games. Fun is the most important condition that assures the effectiveness in video games. When games are fun they fascinate, they are irresistible, addictive or furiously engaging. If a game is not fun or at least interesting, people get bored and quit playing it.

For some time, the idea of fun and video games took all my attention. I wanted to know why people played video games. So, when I visited the gaming festival: *Penny Arcade Expo (PAX)*²⁵ I randomly interviewed several gamers, video game lovers and a couple of specialized journalists. Then, I edited a video (see next page). The result of this ethnographical study showed that, in the majority of the cases, people were playing games to kill time or to fill their leisure time. I found this conflictive as it went in the opposite direction of fun. Clearly, there was something disquieting or uneasy going on beneath the surface. Yet, at that point I did not know what it was. The discovery came afterwards. Meanwhile, I just kept wandering...

One of those days, I went to MIT bookstore and found two books that immediately called my attention: "A Philosophy of Boredom" by Lars Svendsen (a Norwegian philosopher) and "The Secret World of Doing Nothing" by Billy Ehn and Orvar Lofgren (Swedish social scientists). Given that I had bumped with boredom before, I realized how intriguing this concept really was, and how little people talked about it. So, I got the books for pure curiosity and began to read them. Soon, I found myself immersed in the reading. I was finding and finding, more and more.

²³ "The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language." *Ogilvie, John*. Google Books, 1883. Web. 06 May 2012. P. 52 <http://books.google.com/books/about/The_imperial_dictionary_of_the_English_l.html?id=L9MD66oixdwC>.

²⁴ "Arthur Schopenhauer Quotes." *Web*. 06 May 2012. <http://www.searchquotes.com/search/Arthur_Schopenhauer/5/>.

²⁵ This mega-event had an official attendance of 69,500 visitors and it took place at the Boston Convention Center in March 2011.



He plays video games to fill the time. Most of his leisure time is filled up with that.



He feels like playing video games after finishing his homework.



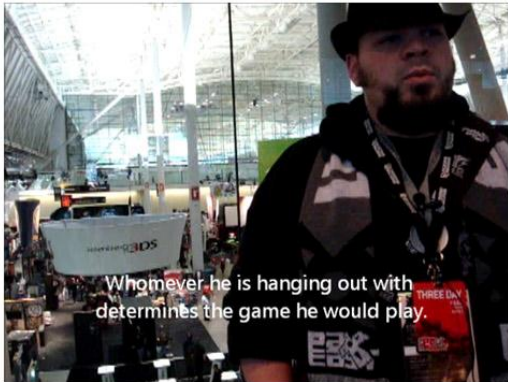
Video games are a escape for Stacey. A escape from daily life, paying bills,



He just played a game he won't play again.



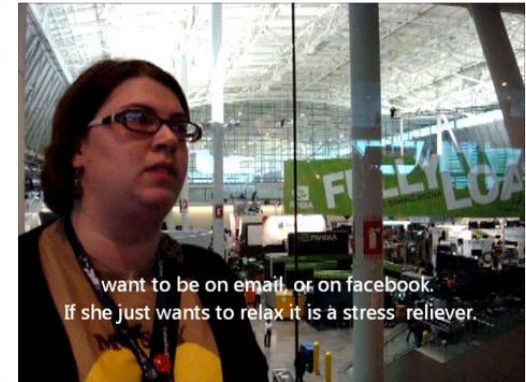
The last game he plays keeps coming back to his mind throughout the day.



Whoever he is hanging out with determines the game he would play.



The moment when Allison decides to play a game happens when she doesn't...



want to be on email, or on facebook. If she just wants to relax it is a stress' reliever.

As I devoured the *Philosophy of Boredom*, I finally understood the interviewees' unfortunate drive. The text said: "Boredom is not just an inner state of mind; it is also a characteristic of the world, for we anticipate in social practices that are saturated with boredom." No matter how much I liked video games, I had to accept the "crude" reality. Some people were playing these games because they were simply bored, not because they wanted to defy the system of productivity. "My" gamers were not the anarchists of society I wanted to believe they were. I naively thought they played video games because they had a cause. Sad to say, they were not even rebels without a cause. Still, the news about boredom was fascinating. Boredom was a massive issue that affected society as a whole. In this regard Svendsen said: "That boredom has serious consequences for a society, not only for individuals, ought to be beyond all doubt. That it is also serious for individuals is because boredom involves a loss of meaning, and a loss of meaning is serious for the afflicted person. I do not believe that we can say that the world appears to be meaningless because one is bored, or that one is bored because the world appears to be meaningless. There is hardly a simple relationship between a cause and an effect."²⁶

The loss of meaning the Norwegian philosopher mentioned made my mind tick. As I continued to read his book, a concept that I recognized absolutely in the depths of my artistic being came about. It blew my mind. Svendsen defined it: "*Romantic boredom* is characterized by not knowing what one is searching for, other than an unspecified, boundless fullness of life. It is rooted in the search for the infinite... The romantic does not know what he is looking for, except that it is to represent some sort of infinite meaning. Without such a 'grand meaning' there is no meaning at all."²⁷ *Romantic boredom* explained the core of my artistic conflict; my void, my search for that something that I did not know what it was (a supreme grand idea for a work of art?). Svendsen had translated the dissatisfaction I had with my creative process in words: "Boredom normally arises when we cannot do what we want to do, or have to do something we do not want to do. But what about when we have no idea of what we want to do, when we have lost the capacity to get out our bearing in life?"²⁸ Crucial questions the philosopher posed. What if we have many ideas and none is worth implementing? What if we lose the capacity endure or to make ourselves feel enthusiastic about the process of art making? One thing that remained invariable: I had never really enjoyed the actual implementation of the art products. The simple mental event of having an idea made me happy enough. However, before I got the affliction, I was so driven to materialize my ideas that I did not think much about the burden of producing them. It just came with the territory. My sense of curiosity did not help much either, "because there is no substantial distinction between the significant and the insignificant, everything becomes equally interesting and as a result equally boring."²⁹

²⁶ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 15

²⁷ Ibid. P. 60

²⁸ Ibid. P. 19

²⁹ Ibid. P. 61

I could have never explained these things in the precise way Svendsen does. My romantic boredom overwhelmed me. Every time I tried to explain my artistic conflict to others I would mostly receive suggestions to “solve” the formalization of art products. The intentions were good but my issue was existential, not logistic. I needed to go to the depths and touch the drain. I had lost the ability to find meaning in my ideas and to make things special for me, not the ability to produce art.³⁰ My frustration was traced in my own failure to communicate this. Nonetheless, to be fair with my romantic boredom, I fondly appreciate what it has done for my art and my life so far. Instead of following a line and developing a regular pattern, my work has given unexpected turns. My romantic affliction has pushed me to explore others fields, exploit my creativity, and follow unconventional paths. It has also become a creative tool that has diversified my practice. Suffering from boredom was confusing and not easy. Nietzsche said that “boredom is ‘the unpleasant “calm” of the soul’ that precedes creative acts, and while creative spirits endure boredom, ‘lesser natures’ flee from it.”³¹

Researching, reading and thinking about boredom, as a state of mind and emotion, resulted very pleasing and stimulating. Poets, philosophers and anthropologists, as well as psychologists, social scientists and writers have studied it deeply. I found a lot of useful material about this existential issue in several publications and texts (I have marked at least a third of the pages of the books *A Philosophy of Boredom*, *Boredom, A Lively History*, and *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*, and *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*). Unfortunately, in the context of the ACT program this beautiful, complex and rich subject seemed offensive and shallow for some members of the faculty. I tried to explain the difference between *romantic boredom* and other types of boredom such as *boredom of surfeit*³² or *existential boredom*.³³ I tried to explain that I was not existentially or chronically bored or stuck myself. I did not succeed. My affliction was trivialized and the subject was not taken as a “decent” one. I find this reaction very interesting. In an occasion, for instance, I asked one of my professors to give me references of boredom in art (as in feeling bored about art, like me). The response was: “narda, don’t talk about this”. Peter Toohey, a scholar and professor himself, would have come to my rescue saying: “...No emotion can ever be accused of being trivial or of being unnatural or of being a weakness. Emotions have their own biological and adaptive roles and it is through the emotions that people learn how to adapt their behavior fruitfully to the outside world

³⁰ The concept of art as “making things special” was developed by the anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake in *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes and Why*. New York: The Free Press, 1992. Print.

³¹ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 58

³² Termed by Lars Svendsen as a form of boredom rendered by excess and repetition. “Any experience that’s repeated and repeated until you’re fed up, until you’re replete and stuffed...” Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 13

³³ “Can be described as a kind of ‘emptiness’ resulting from the sufferer’s seeing him- or herself as isolated from others. Worse still, such individuals are living in a secularized world where religion no longer offers solace. They inhabit a fragmented and divided world where regional and even personal royalties have been lost.” Ibid. P. 28

and to come to protect themselves.”³⁴ Then, he would have finished off with: “boredom can encourage creativity. Boredom may drive thinkers and artists to question the accepted and to search for change.”³⁵

It is surprising that there are topics that artists or curators would consider not worth mentioning. In my perception, there is already extensive art production about “serious” issues (e.g. politics, ethics, social issues, etc.). This is fine, it is crucial. Yet, art about “trivial” subjects such as boredom, laziness, or leisure is equally relevant. These are not new topics in art either. In the Romantic period, for instance, philosophers, artists, and writers pointed out at emotions, such as melancholia, to complement logical reason. Svendsen’s thesis argues that “Romanticism constitutes the most central basis, in terms of the history of ideas, for an understanding of modern boredom.”³⁶ For these reasons, “problematic” subjects should not be excluded, especially in a graduate program that emphasizes on the intersection of art, culture and technology. “Boredom is not just a phenomenon that afflicts individuals; it is, to just as great an extent, a social and cultural phenomenon.”³⁷ Yet, I understand the kind of concerns that boredom can raise in the faculty. Nonetheless, these academic anxieties are not justifiable, but could be interesting subjects of study. My “rescuer” affirms this about scholars: “Scholars, let it be said, are especially prone to melancholia.”³⁸ This is what they believe. It often causes them to expire in the midst of their research and sometimes even to hang themselves in their studies.”³⁹ For these reasons, boredom, melancholia, disgust, or idleness are complex human matters that intertwine with other aspects of life.

3.2.C.› BOREDOM: A WESTERN AFFLICTION ?

As I continued trying to understand my romantic boredom, some questions popped up: Was my romantic affliction Western? Had I been “infected” in my trip to The Netherlands? Why had it not paralyzed me? To which extent did the affliction make me a Westerner, or how much of a non-Westerner was I? To answer these questions I began elaborating the text below. But, I hesitated for a long period before adding these lines to the chronicle. I am not sure to be ready to talk about Bolivia. It is too complex and way too complicated. There is a lot to say and very little said. Also, there are fundamental references that I am not even reading yet. For

³⁴ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P.32

³⁵ Ibid. 185

³⁶ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 9

³⁷ Ibid. P.52

³⁸ Which is a mental state similar to boredom. Like a close cousin of boredom.

³⁹ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P.121

example, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* written by the Indian theorist Gayatri Spivak. I am deliberately leaving the post-colonial, and globalization issues for the future. I kindly ask the reader not to arrive to conclusions about Bolivia, based in my words, unless you have solid knowledge about my country and its culture. The reader may skip this section.

Bolivia is a non-Western multicultural, multiethnic, pluriracial, and polytheist society, although some ethnic groups receive Western education. It is a variegated and fragmented society. However, there are three things that the majority of Bolivians might have in common: the devotion for fiestas and dancing, the passion for soccer, and the nostalgia for the lost sea. Bolivians love to celebrate, make parties, and dance for life, regardless of how fucked up the situation is. Bolivia can easily be the land of fiesta, which is the most important cultural manifestation of all. Fiestas are celebrated throughout the entire year, in every coin of the *plurinational* estate. Believe me. I have found a funny sentence for the non-Bolivian reader that accurately describes our form of life: “It was then that we learned that Bolivians embrace their local fiestas in much the same way Americans enjoy their summertime barbecues.”

Anyhow, in Bolivia we live life in present tense, with little concerns about the future. It is what it is. In fact, for Aymaras –the largest ethnic Bolivian group–the future is behind because you can’t see it, and the past is in front because you do. Bolivia is a wonderful complex and beautiful rich (really rich) territory. Unfortunately, it is a country in constant crisis due to social, political and economical instability, and geographical differences. Issues and conflicts are part of our everyday life. Reality means “unsolvable real problems” for us. This somehow “surreality” preoccupies the population. Existential afflictions such as melancholia, solitude, or existential boredom are not common amongst Bolivians. However, we do suffer from nostalgia. We feel nostalgic about the lost territories. Especially the regions next to the Pacific Ocean that currently belong to Chile. Bolivians are “sentimental” about them. Our deep blue sentiment is not only about not having access to the sea. It is about knowing that the beautiful liquid immensity was ours and it is not anymore. Besides this particular case, the former states of mind are not in our collective lexicon. I support this assertion based on my humble empirical knowledge of the content of Bolivian media, and intellectual life. The form of boredom Bolivians may suffer from, as any other human group, is *boredom of surfeit*⁴⁰ which is quite understandable. Bolivian society might be immune to other types of boredom. (Is this why the subject fascinates me?).

In the book *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*, John Schumaker, the author affirms that “Chronic boredom is unique in Western culture. Little if any boredom can be found in traditional societies that have an abundance of shared activities, person-to-person communication, extended family interaction, community participation, and other social and spiritual

⁴⁰ See page 35 or footnote 32.

endeavours that provide stimulation and meaning. Even people living in extremely stark environments, like the desert Bedouins, show no signs of the boredom that festers in modern consumer culture.”⁴¹ As a Westerner, Toohey agrees but says: “Admittedly some societies seem relatively immune to boredom, but at what cost? I would not like to inhabit the unthinking world of the ritual past. Self-consciousness, self-questioning have no place in such rigid worlds.”⁴² I accept that self-exploration and self-questioning are fundamental. But I am not sure to agree with Toohey’s notion of rigid worlds.

Studying the lack of boredom in a given society seems quite interesting, as well as finding the differences of how romantic boredom, for instance, affects Westerners and non-Westerners. But what about existential boredom which is considered as a philosophical sickness that affects the individual?⁴³ Toohey arrived to a definition of existential boredom that fully covers the extent of this philosophical sickness. He said: “Existential boredom entails a powerful and unrelieved sense of emptiness, isolation and disgust in which the individual feels a persistent lack of interest in and difficulty with concentrating on his current circumstances.”⁴⁴ As I read this definition, I wonder if Aymaras, individually, could suffer from this particular affliction. At first glance, I would say no and Toohey would agree with me because he thinks that “boredom isn’t necessarily and at all times part of human life. Human always have had the capacity for this emotion.. but not all societies enable or require humans to experience boredom.” Another reason why I think Aymaras could not suffer from existential boredom is because the nature of their society is communal. As opposed to what some readers might think, I believe that a society that has not undergone through a period of individualism lacks the benefits of existential thinking. Equilibrium is necessary. An individualist society does not function well either, if it has not experienced community. “Lars Svendsen observes in his *Philosophy of Boredom*, ‘when individualism is conformist, conformism also becomes individualist’.”⁴⁵ I would add that when a community is conformist, conformism also becomes communal. And here I stop and leave these questions for my next studies, as I mentioned earlier.

⁴¹ Schumaker, John. *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Print. P. 186

⁴² Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 190

⁴³ Ibid. P. 5

⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 141

⁴⁵ Ibid. P. 76

3.3.› THE TREATMENT OR RELIEF FOR MY ROMANTIC BOREDOM

Once I had finally identified and explored my affliction, I wondered for a while what a relief or treatment for it would be. There were times, I thought I was going to be bored forever, sometimes I thought it was part of my nature. But one day, I do not remember how, I had the conscious idea to do the most obvious thing: **SEARCH FOR MEANING**. It seemed to be quite an impossible task since I could not even explain what I meant by “meaning”. The search began in the “small details of life”: dreams, daily routines or repetitive actions, daydreaming, and in cognitive- learning-technological moments. I chose all these instances because I instinctively/naturally feel curious, interested, or amused by them: they **mean** something to me. There are no further explanations behind these choices. As a first step, I executed some exercises that lead me to some findings. Thanks to these small “experiments” I had a couple of ideas that I would truly like to implement. I have generated a body of poetic gestures that I would like to transform into poetry (in the richest and purest sense of the word).

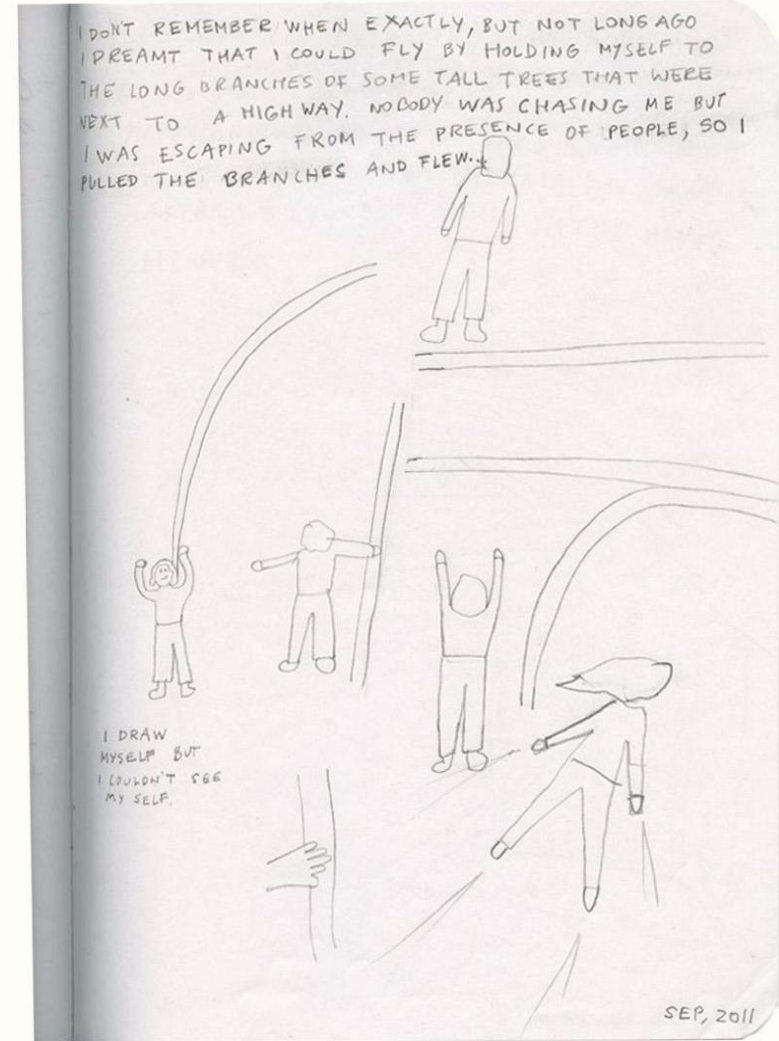
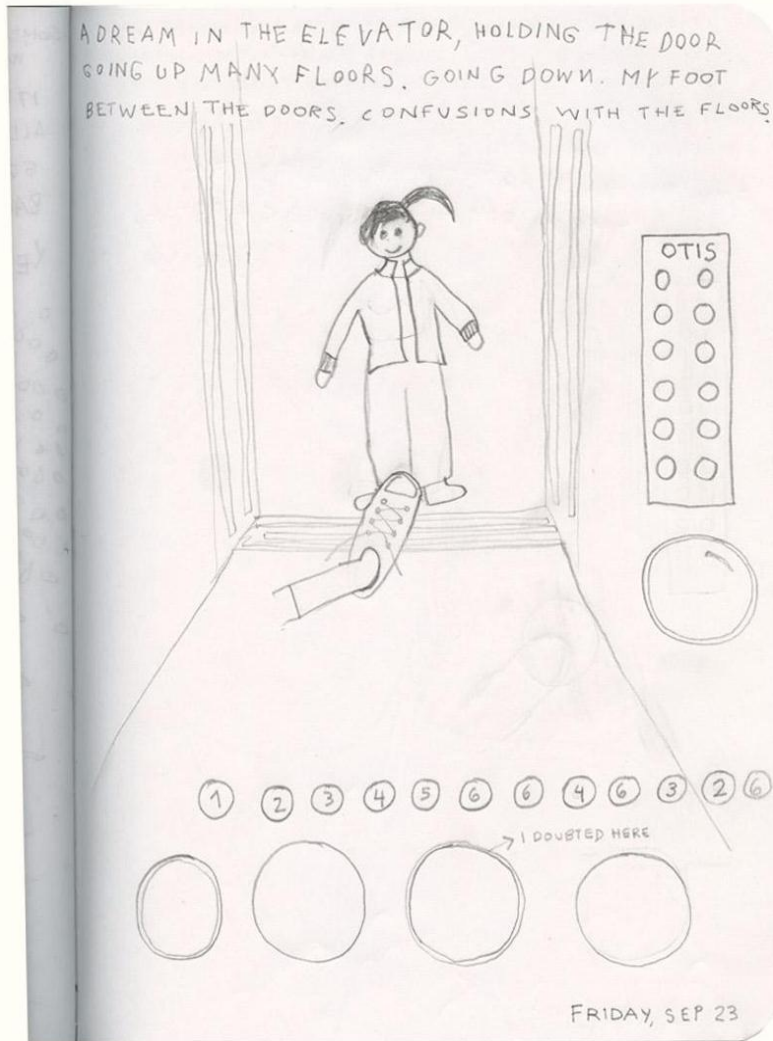
3.3.A.› DREAMING

1) DREAM JOURNAL:⁴⁶ I began to write a *dream journal* for the class: *The Biology of Conscious States: Waking, Sleeping and Dreaming* that I took as a listener at Harvard (see next page). The idea was to find meaning, or answers to the questions I would pose before going to sleep. Keeping the diary was not a demanding task, but it required some discipline and speed. I had to write down the dreams as soon as I woke up. Otherwise, the dreams would get lost somewhere in my brain, as it happened with the majority of them. Many dreams were left unregistered since I had to get ready for classes, or for other reasons. None of the questions were answered in my dreams. It has been a while since I registered my dreams for the last time. Usually, I would make the drawings of the dreams during the class (I attended it as a listener). The last entry does not have drawings. It says:

“For some stupid reason I couldn’t go to the space. Instead, someone else went. A woman. She kind of told me how it was like. It was like a big bowl upside down with green stains. That was her description of the universe. I could see it, but not experience it. It was frustrating. There were also some women who were kicking people from a house. I had to rush, and get out of there. I couldn’t finish my coca-cola.” Friday Oct 28, 2011.

⁴⁶ “A dream journal (or dream diary) is a journal in which dream experiences are recorded. A dream journal might include a record of nightly dreams, personal reflections and waking dream experiences. It is often used in the study of dreams and psychology. Dream journals are also used by people trying to lucid dream.” “Dream Journal.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 06 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream_journal>.

FINDING: Entries with drawings evoke and remind me the images of the dreams. Pure text does not help much to remember a dream; I might still have the feeling of the dream's sensation, but not its image. I am planning to continue with the journal and the study of dreaming, as a conscious state, in the future.



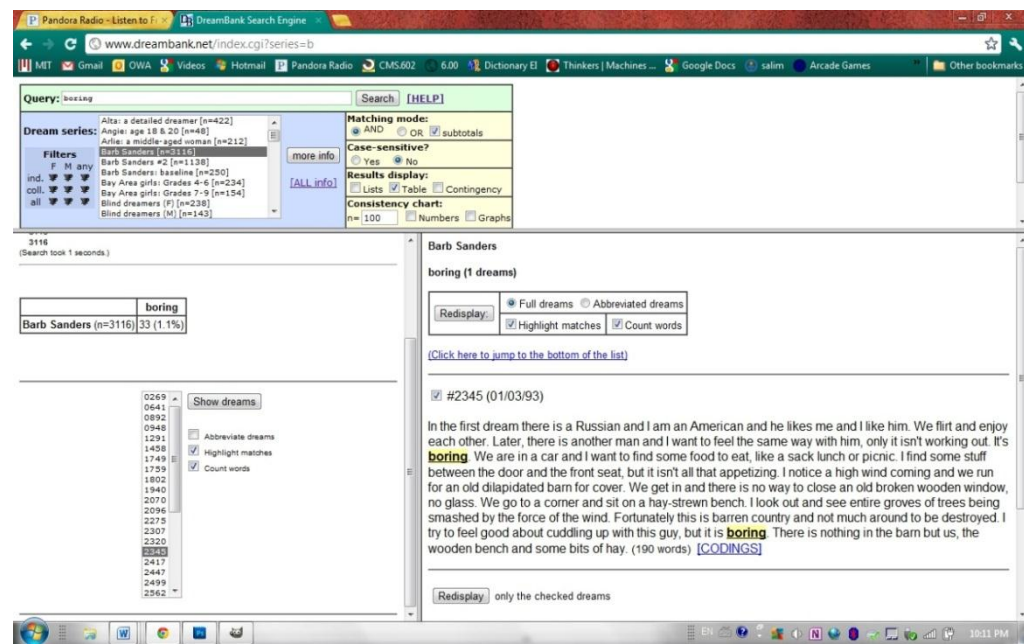
2) SLEEPING SCHEDULE: On a certain day, I had the idea to sleep instead of procrastinating on Internet. In order to register the exercise, I wrote down the dates and times I had the "naps". It was a good exercise as long as I implemented it in my office at the Venus Lab, because the couch was not very comfortable, and my subconscious knew I was not at home. I would wake up with no problems and continue working. The experiment began to fail the moment I was doing both: sleeping instead of procrastinating, and procrastinating on Internet.

FINDING: One of the outcomes as a result of thinking about my "naps" was to make art while sleeping (e.g. putting a paper on the bed and sleeping on top of it, or something like that). I loved this idea because it could potentially remove the "burden" of having to produce the piece. I would only have to go to sleep. Perfect!

SLEEPING SCHEDULE
(INSTEAD OF PROCASTINATION)

AUG 31	→	12:18 a.m. - 1:47 p.m.
SEP 1	→	8:30 a.m. - 11:45 p.m.
SEP 4	→	5:00 p.m. - 7:17 p.m.
SEP 5	→	7:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. (I felt guilty)
SEP 7	→	7:01 p.m. - 9:02 p.m.
SEP 9	→	5:42 p.m. - 7:45 p.m.
SEP 14	→	7:41 - 8:50 p.m.
OCT 9	→	8:30 - 11:30 p.m.
OCT 19	→	10:20 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.
OCT 28	→	2:00 am. 4:50 am. [DREAM]

3) BOREDOM IN DREAMS: Finally, a tiny discovery I made for the “dreaming” class I attended as a listener. We were given the assignment to check The DreamBank⁴⁷ and find a research subject. This bank holds a “collection of over 20,000 dream reports. The reports come from a variety of different sources and research studies, and they can be analyzed using the search engine and statistical programs built into this site.”⁴⁸ So, I typed boredom, bored, and boring in all the cases available. Very few entries came up, until I arrived to the case of Barb Sanders (fictitious name given in the site), who is “a middle-aged adult woman who has written down most of her dreams since about 1977.”⁴⁹ The site contains 3116 dreams of hers, between 1960 and 1997. Barb used the word boring extensively which surprised me, since I found it hard to have had a dream in which I felt bored. Would it be truly possible to feel bored in a dream? I presented my question to the class. My professors said that it was a good question. They also mentioned not knowing of any study about the subject yet. Well, good for me



⁴⁷ “DreamBank”. Adam Schneider & G. William Domhoff. *Psychology Department University of California, Santa Cruz*. Web, 6 May 2012. <<http://www.dreambank.net/>>.

⁴⁸ “DreamBank Search Engine.” Adam Schneider & G. William Domhoff. *Psychology Department University of California, Santa Cruz*. Web. 06 May 2012. <<http://www.dreambank.net/search.html>>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

3.3.B.› DAILY ROUTINES AND REPETITIVE ACTIONS

I. – CUTTING AND PASTING WHILE WATCHING FILMS: During the summer 2011, I found a pile of *Time* magazines (issues Jun, 2009 to May, 2011) in my dorm’s hall (Tang). I wanted to read them all, but did not have enough time to do so. Watching the unread pile made me feel uncomfortable. It reminded me to all the things I had pending. So, one day I decided to save the articles “for the future”, keep the images that I simply liked, and make cutouts out of them before recycling the magazines. During those hot days, I went to *MIT Coop* and found a notebook that had the aesthetics of an old one. I bought it for the sake of having it, but soon I used it to paste the *Time* cutouts. Yet, for some reasons (probably grounded on my unfortunate catholic education) I felt guilty to spend time on a “trivial” activity. I guess I was feeling the moral obligation and the pressure to make “serious art”. The only way to avoid guilt consisted in embracing my collage, going for it no matter what, and baptizing my brand new notebook as ***New Research on Time Use notebook*** (see next page). To feel more “productive” (or less guilty), I chose to cut and paste, and compose the new images as I watched all kinds of movies and documentaries on *Netflix*. Doing a simple collage made me happy. Some of the movies I watched were: “The Swimming Pool”, “When Nietzsche Wept”, “Whale Rider”, “Muriel’s Wedding”, “Happily Ever After”, “Good Will Hunting”, “Portlandia”, “Queen: Making of a Night at the Opera”, “The Diary of Anne Frank”, “Kurt Cobain: About a Son”, “I’am a Cyborg, but That’s Ok.”, and many more. Frankly, I was so truly engaged in this cut-and-paste-and-watch-movies activity that I just want to get more notebooks. Yet, when I presented my dear collage in a midterm presentation I encountered disaster. After my 15 minutes show, one of my professors told me to take myself seriously, but others said the collage was beautiful. I think so too. I did it with fun and affection. It had a “daydreamy” quality.

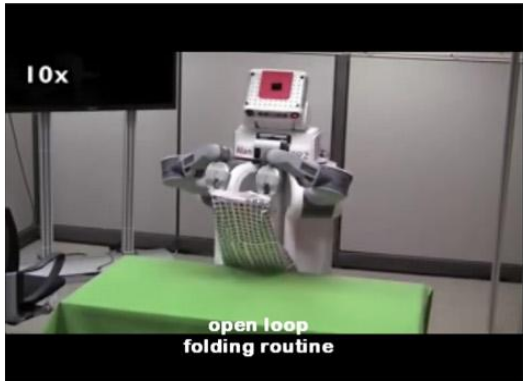
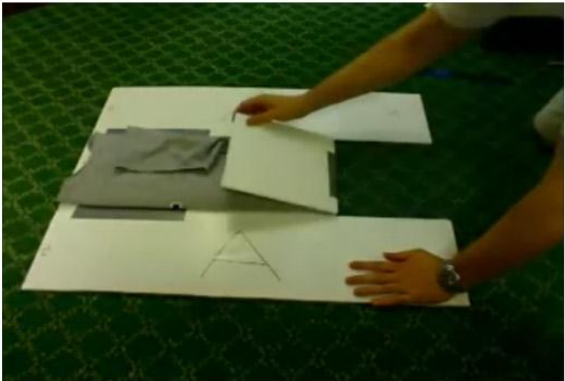
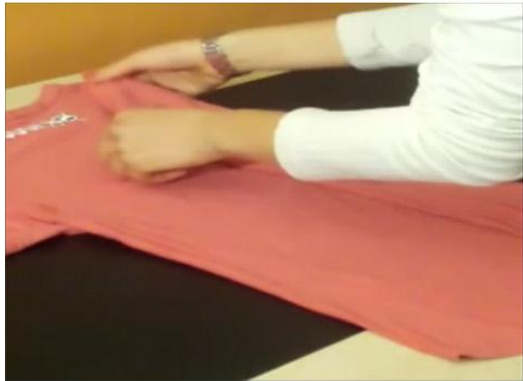


2.- FOLDING A T-SHIRT YOUTUBE VIDEO COMPILATION: In the context of the course “*The Philosophy of Creativity*” I wrote a research paper in which I state that creativity “redeems” routine, repetition and monotony. The reader will find an adaptation of this text (according to the general outline of this thesis) in chapter 6 *Daydreaming, the True Anarchist and How Creativity ‘Redeems’ Routine and Repetition*. I learnt so much with this paper that I needed to do visualize my argument. It states that ordinary cognitive processes can turn into outstanding acts of creativity. These creative acts refer to actions rendered on a condition where creativity is less likely to happen —or where it apparently seems less prone to occur: routine, repetition, or monotony. Through my study of creativity on the smallest things of life, I position myself as an artist who believes that extraordinary creativity happens outside the realm of contemporary-art. I am talking about ART with capitals letters. Common mortals are developing the language of vernacular creativity, or the real language of daily life. This is more interesting than exhibitions.

For the visualization of my argument, I collected a series of *YouTube* videos of humans executing the small gesture of folding a T-shirt in the fastest or the most efficient form. The video *The Evolution of a Daily Routine* shows a lineal sequence of the evolution of the act —or the combination of a cognitive process and physical procedure— to fold a t-shirt. The first video shows the execution of a regular, conventional technique. Then a man uses a “Japanese” technique to fold t-shirts in 4 seconds, followed by the introduction of the *FlipFold Shirt Folder*. This manual device created by a housewife folds t-shirts to perfection in the blink of an eye. A later video shows a girl who implemented her own *FlipFold* cardboard version, succeeded by a more complex cardboard version of the same folder. Next, my video presents a mechanical shirt folder —made at home. The penultimate video displays a robot unsuccessfully folding a t-shirt. The task looks so difficult that it is touching. Last, a man removes his t-shirt so fast that I needed to set the video in slow motion (see next page).

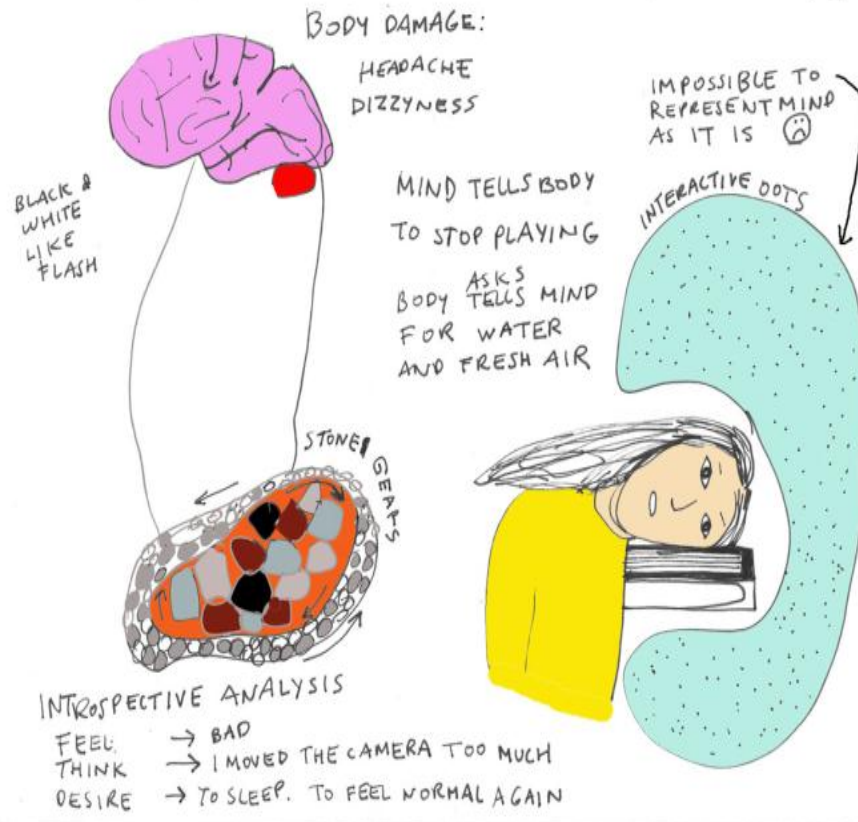
FINDING: Hopefully, this exploration in the petty world of the ‘unimportant’ things of life will spring a tiny idea of the relevance of the ordinary cognitive processes in the fabrications of creativity. According to Prof. Irwin Singer —the instructor of my class— there is not much written about the domain of creativity.

The evolution of a daily routine:
Folding a T-shirt
(YouTube video compilation)

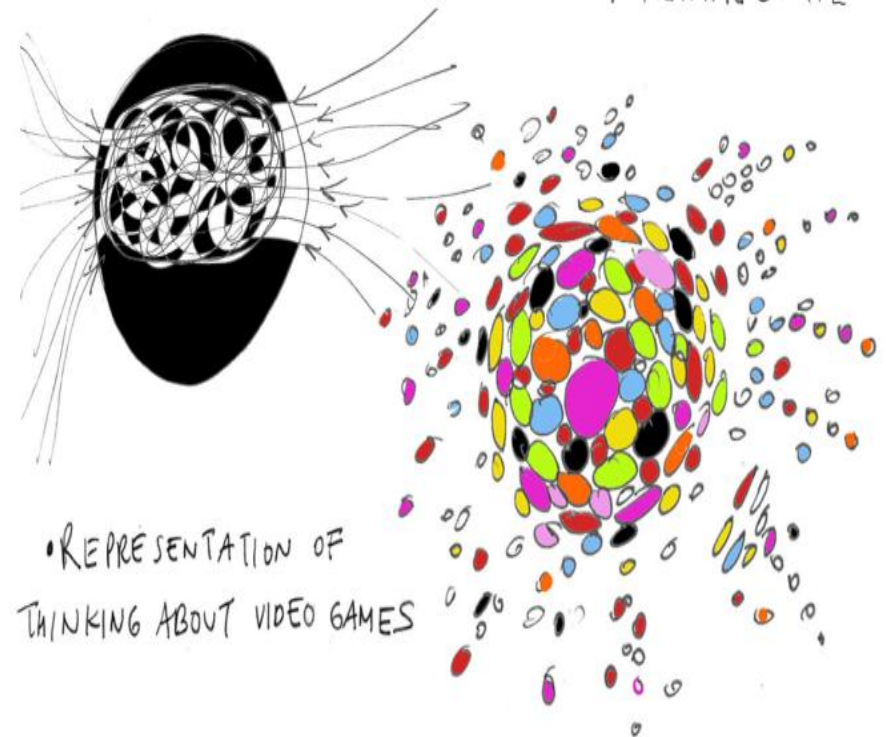


3.- COGNITIVE-TECHNOLOGICAL-LEARNING MOMENTS: This term refers to those mental events generated by playing video games, or when using computer applications and programs (graphics software, information workers, educational software, etc.). To understand my fascination for video games and to find the particular meaning they had for me, I tried to visualize (or represent) the feeling of learning, or understanding something that was relevant for me. Or, when something, simply made me tick. I argue that this natural ticking is a chunk of meaning. For example, I painfully learned that I get dizzy with the camera movements of 3D video games. It was not a good experience, but a good learning moment (drawings below, left). For a long time, I tried to explain the mental state the fascination for video games produced in me. The drawings on the right (below) show how it kind of was.

FIRST SESSION OF PLAYING PSYCHONAUTS



CURRENT MENTAL STATE



3.3.C.) PLAYING CAR RACING VIDEO GAMES



While I was searching for meaning, I used to play car racing video games with Otkrist -one of my MediaLab friends. He introduced me to *Need for Speed*, *Burnout*, and *Split Second*. We played quite often during the summer, on a big screen he had in his office. I also played several “fast simple racing games” by myself on my computer. I did not think much about racing games in the beginning. However, little by little I realized that I enjoyed them way more than other types of games. They were exciting, and very engaging. They had a strong immersive quality that fixed me to the screen for hours. I felt a real connection, like if something made sense. I had an inner quite silent dialogue with myself, especially with *Need for Speed*. There is a moment when the cars crash fatally, and things go very slowly and explode into pieces... I’m going to die. I’m dying. I die. It’s a mixture between a cutscene and my actual avatar-car floating in the space. I am suspended, surrounded by debris. It feels beautiful. I found myself wanting to die again and again, probably to feel the thrill of slow motion. I remember trying to accelerate as much as possible to see how high I could fly into the precipice. What a feeling! To reach the finite, the limit... the end of my boredom? I still do not know what it was. Fortunately, Svendsen, the “astute philosophical chronicler of boredom”⁵⁰, explains my need to die again and again: “One’s own death can never be a clear *object* for consciousness, and it is precisely why only death can represent transcendence in a world where immanence has become total

⁵⁰ As Peter Toohey calls Lars Svendsen

and an outside has been completely eradicated. In a world of immanence, nothing genuinely new can come into being, and the only option left is to hold on to, or attempt to increase, and already existing meaning. One way of doing this is by means of repetitions. Certain events are perceived as containing such a wealth of meaning that repetition of them should be able to transfer this meaning to the repeter.⁵¹ Paul Virilio also describes my desire to die virtually: “When you play at chance, you are compelled to play and thus no longer free to play; and a physical or mental death occurs. Now video games or the more sophisticated games of tomorrow's virtual reality will induce this same desire for death. A desire to cross the boundary.”⁵²

It is funny, but I wanted to know if players could think about something besides playing *Need for Speed*. So, Otkrist and I had a session during which I asked him trivial questions. He could only give very short answers. Whenever he focused more on the questions he would crash or lose points. Otkrist is an expert virtual racer who has played racing games from an early age. So, even if he was a trained and skillful player he could not really have a proper conversation. He was striving to answer my questions. What was going on in the world of *Need for Speed* was clearly more interesting than my petty conversation. Otkrist was immersed. There was no way I could drag him back to this mundane world. I have watched videos of gamers having long conversations while playing some video games, on *YouTube* and in my video game courses, but this was different. Thus, the difficulty to communicate with the world outside the game happens particularly in racing games. I do not aim to affirm: only in racing games. However, their singularity is that “the pilot of a race car does not dare to take his attention off the road. The imperative of total concentration is part of the high. Video games demand this same level of attention. They can give people the feeling of being close to the edge because, as in a dangerous situation, there is no time for rest and the consequences of wandering attention feel dire.”⁵³ Later in the same page of *The Second Self*, Sherry Turkle says about a player: “He says he plays the game because he needs ‘to have something to do which is so hard that I can’t think of anything else.’ The games force him into another mental space where the thoughts and the cares of his day cannot intrude.”⁵⁴

On a very different occasion, I interviewed Otkrist and asked him questions about *Need for Speed*. He had so many things to say. He looked very excited and full of energy as he talked about his experience with this game. My friend told me that he uses racing games to find the satisfaction for his need for speed. He explained that sometimes he plays *Need for Speed* because he needs to let himself go, since this game is about speed and thinking fast. What raised my curiosity was that he relates being bored with being “average”. He

⁵¹ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 92

⁵² The Game of Love and Chance: A Discussion with Paul Virilio. "Paul Virilio." *InfoTechWarPeace*. Web. 19 May 2012. <<http://www.watsoninstitute.org/infopeace/vy2k/sans.cfm>>

⁵³ Turkle, Sherry. *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2005. Print. P.82

⁵⁴ Ibid.

thinks he is an average guy (I don't), and that he is bored (this, I don't know). Otkrist said: "the average guy is bored." Since I do not know what the attributes an average individual has. I do not know what to say. However, it would be interesting to find out the psychophysiological characteristics of the "average bored guy". Anyhow, my friend then said: "Sometimes, things in life stop moving. They get stuck and you want to see things moving. You want to live something extraordinary. These games make your life exciting as much as you can. No significance to it. No tangible effect on the real world. It's a shiny glistening product, you want to have it. If you cannot have this excitement in the real world, it satisfies you partially. If you think about it (the impossibility), the satisfaction goes away. It's about getting high. When you play a racing game you get adrenaline, dopamine. It gets you hard, it gets you excited. I do it a lot."

I am glad that Otkrist's interview has brought up the subject of the physiological aspects of boredom. The *Lively History of Boredom* asserts "What boredom actually is may be traced to a lack of the neurotransmitter dopamine. Dopamine is the reward system of the brain. This brain chemical has been linked to such emotions as joy and excitement. It triggers a response in human brains that in a sense *is* these emotions. Dopamine depletion would make both of these much harder to experience."⁵⁵ If my interviewee is an average bored guy (not bored average guy), he is naturally feeding his body with dopamine. Racing games are Otkrist's self-medication, which means that he might have lower levels of dopamine, for this reason, he requires a heightened sense of novelty to stimulate his brain –to get dopamine flowing, in other words."⁵⁶ This sense of novelty differentiates virtual drivers than other type of players. Speed racers are novelty seekers, not killers, winners, socializers, nor even explorers. They are not exploring the routes, tracks, circuits or paths of the racing worlds. They race because they are looking to fulfill their physiological needs. Their brains need the thrills and the inoffensive dangers of virtual speed. In the chapter *Chronic Boredom and the Company it Keeps*, Toohey says: "individuals who had been classed as novelty-seekers were found to have fewer dopamine receptors. Their brains are less efficient at modulating levels of dopamine, so during dangerous or thrilling activities, individuals with fewer delimiting dopamine receptors seem to gain the greatest stimulation. No wonder they then keep doing whatever it is that gives them this incredible stimulation. Parachuting, driving too fast, spending too much, engaging in illicit sexual behavior, as well as taking drugs, are all drawn into this dopamine-driven web."⁵⁷

The last aspect I would like to address is the relationship of dopamine, speed and the pace of time. The idea of going fast, or feeling that one goes fast, blurs the perception of real time and gives a thrilling but peaceful feeling. Racing games "reverse" the speed of time: going very fast like going very slow, so much that some virtual racers, or even real drivers, reach the sense of stillness. A study mentioned by Toohey, has showed for instance, that children with ADD "find periods of inactivity excessively boring because a lower

⁵⁵ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 46

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. P. 55

level of dopamine affects their sense of time; for them, unoccupied minutes pass more slowly, so they feel bored much more quickly than others with normal levels.”⁵⁸ So, when the levels of dopamine are high, time passes faster. If both, the dopamine and the speed are extremely high, there might be a limit for the brain to assimilate this. When the brain reaches this limit, the racer might have a distorted perception of time, and probably space too. He might perceive things in “slow motion”, or stillness.

A PERTINENT NOTE

This is the finish line of the *Method of Understanding*. However, it is not where this epistemological adventure ends. Briefly, the subject of car racing games directed me to *Formula 1*, the sport. In this extreme sport I found Ayrton Senna, the driver. Then, the exploration continued to *Formula 1* video games, and last to sports video games. This thesis dedicates an entire chapter to virtual and real *Formula 1*. Chapter 7: *The Real and the Virtual Formula 1 Racing*.

3.4.➤ KEY WORDS

BOREDOM: “Meaninglessness is boring. And boredom can be described metaphorically as a meaning withdrawal. Boredom can be understood as a discomfort which communicates that the need for meaning is not being satisfied.” (See P. 24 quote 7).

BOREDOM OF SURFEIT: “Any experience that’s repeated and repeated until you’re fed up, until you’re replete and stuffed...” (See P. 35 quote 32)

CONCEPT OF MEANING: “Peter Wessel Zapffe attempted to articulate a concept of meaning: ‘*That an action or some other fragment of life has meaning means that it gives us a quite specific feeling that is not easy to translate into thought. It would have to be something like the action having a good enough intention, so that when the intention is fulfilled, the action is ‘justified’. Settled, confirmed –and the subject calms down’.*” (See P. 92 quote 163).

⁵⁸ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 46

DROMOMANIA: “Dromomania, also travelling fugue, is an uncontrollable psychological urge to wander. People with this condition spontaneously depart from their routine travel long distances and take up different identities and occupations. Months may pass before they return to their former identities. The term comes from the Greek: dromos (running) and mania (insanity)” (See P. 17 quote 3)

EXISTENTIAL BOREDOM: “Can be described as a kind of ‘emptiness’ resulting from the sufferer’s seeing him- or herself as isolated from others. Worse still, such individuals are living in a secularized world where religion no longer offers solace. They inhabit a fragmented and divided world where regional and even personal royalties have been lost.” (See P. 35 quote 33)

EXISTENTIALISM: “Existentialism is generally considered to be the philosophical and cultural movement which holds that the starting point of philosophical thinking must be the individual and the experiences of the individual, that moral thinking and scientific thinking together do not suffice to understand human existence, and, therefore, that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to understand human existence. (Authenticity, in the context of existentialism, is the degree to which one is true to one's own personality, spirit, or character).” (See P. 91 quote 162)

MEANING: “My existentialist approach regards meaning as strictly subjective and personal. It belongs to the individual exclusively (only he knows what it means). For this reason, it cannot be prescribed. However, my aim is to expose metaphors for the search of it.” (See P. 14). In the first line of this thesis’ abstract, I establish that “Meaning provides the individual with a sense of a purpose to live, to be with the self, and to feel at ease.” (See P. 5)

METHOD OF UNDERSTANDING: “Personal chronicle. It explains the reasons, doubts, difficulties, questions, findings, issues, and the trajectory of the investigation. Also, it breaks down my search for meaning in three phases: loss of meaning, search for meaning and the treatment for the loss...” (See P. 22)

ROMANTIC BOREDOM: It is “characterized by not knowing what one is searching for, other than an unspecified, boundless fullness of life. It is rooted in the search for the infinite... The romantic does not know what he is looking for, except that it is to represent some sort of infinite meaning. Without such a ‘grand meaning’ there is no meaning at all.” (See P. 34 quote 27).

PART II

“When you play at chance, you are compelled to play and thus no longer free to play; and a physical or mental death occurs. Now, video games or the more sophisticated games of tomorrow's virtual reality will induce this same desire for death. A desire to cross the boundary.”

PAUL VIRILIO

“Playing is an anthropological condition to survive.”

PIAGET

4› A LOSS OF MEANING: BOREDOM AND VIDEO GAMES

4.1› PLAYING VIDEO GAMES TO AVOID BOREDOM OR TO FIND MEANING ?

Boredom might appear trivial but it is a deep and common existential human matter essentially related to meaning. A single fixed definition of boredom would not comprise its real philosophical complexity and conceptual extension enough. There are many words to describe similar states: tedium, acedia, ennui, monotony, and others, as there are different kinds of boredom. However, in this chapter, boredom should be fundamentally understood as “‘meaning withdrawal’, or as a discomfort which communicates that the need for meaning is not being satisfied.”⁵⁹ Moreover, boredom is “an emotion which produces feelings of being constrained or confined by some unavoidable and distastefully predictable circumstance and, as a result, a feeling of being distanced from one’s surroundings and the normal flow of time.”⁶⁰ “Human beings are addicted to meaning. We all have a great problem: Our lives must have some sort of content. We cannot bear to live our lives without some sort of content that we can see as constituting a meaning. Humans lose meaning on a regular basis.

To study the role of boredom in video games, this chapter considers two different types of boredom⁶¹ defined in the *Method of Understanding*: **existential boredom** and **boredom of surfeit**. These definitions set the frame to examine the dialectic relationship of boredom and video games, as opposed to the intrinsic relation between fun and play. This chapter does not aim to propose a cure or solution to the boredom induced by some video games, or to fix boring gameplay design issues. This study stands to regard boredom as a healthy and necessary condition to render self-reflection and self-knowledge. This inquiry through the exciting domains of boredom comes with an Internet finding. This ‘tool’ will help us speculate and navigate in the colorful waters of the video game world in order to question our notions, ideas, beliefs or understanding of boredom.

The dialectic relationship between video games and boredom has not been studied enough. Game theorists –as video game lovers and defenders— seem to be too enthusiastic about the learning potentials of fun and oblivious of the learning possibilities of boredom. In this sense, boredom should be regarded as a tool that “...can contain critical reflective potential and can be a powerful

⁵⁹ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 30

⁶⁰ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 45

⁶¹ See page 35. Footnotes 32 and 33.

stimulus to creativity”.⁶² Also, as “...an opportunity for thought and reflection...”.⁶³ Nevertheless, video game developers and designers are more concerned about avoiding, curing, escaping, or combatting boredom and interested in generating entertainment, fun, or amusement instead. Video games aim to engage, and in the worst cases to addict the players. If one googles boredom and video games, the video game sites’ titles one finds are: “*How to deal with boredom using video games*”⁶⁴, “*Top 10 Online Games to Play When You're Bored*”⁶⁵, “*Beat Boredom with Small Online Games*”⁶⁶, or “*Play Boredom Test Video Game*,”⁶⁷ and so on. Unfortunately, the games featured in these sites are not really providing with real tools to combat, or cure the players from boredom, they are just postponing it or “calming” boredom temporarily, and dismissing its benefits as a tool for self-reflection, self-exploration and self-questioning. Lars Svendsen says: “in order to remove this discomfort, we attack the symptoms rather than the disease itself, and a search for all sorts of meaning-surrogates.”⁶⁸

Yet, the fun-boredom relationship is dialectic and not easy to solve since it involves paradox. I have become a video game lover myself and I do believe that video games should be truly fun. The problem is that a truly fun video game can be addictive. Let us not forget that “addiction, whether mild or not, represents a type of confinement”⁶⁹. The questions inherent to the fun nature of games are: Could a video game be truly fun but not addictive? What are the implications of “removing” a bit of fun from video games? Is it possible to remove the addictive ability from a video game, without detaching its fun component? How to develop a video game system of consumption that enables players to “contemplate” their boredom, instead of postponing it? I am talking about a video game or an interactive tool that would confront the player with his own vacuity, or with the emptiness (or loss of meaning) behind the wish to play a video game to combat boredom. It would result beneficial for players to realize they are suffering from lack of meaning. Apropos boredom and meaning, Svendsen says: “The pell-mell rush for diversions precisely indicates our fear of the emptiness that surrounds us. This rush, the demand for satisfaction and the lack of satisfaction are inextricably intertwined. The more strongly individual life becomes

⁶² Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 185

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ "Blog." *How to Deal with Boredom Using Video Games*. Web. 06 May 2012.

<<http://what2dowhenyourbored.org/how-to-deal-with-boredom-using-video-games/>>.

⁶⁵ "Top 10 Online Games to Play When You're Bored." - *TopTenREVIEWS*. Web. 06 May 2012.

<<http://bored-entertainment-websites-review.toptenreviews.com/10-quick-games.html>>.

⁶⁶ "Beat Boredom with Small Online Games." *Yahoo! Contributor Network*. Web. 07 May 2012.

<<http://voices.yahoo.com/beat-boredom-small-online-games-488664.html?cat=9>>

⁶⁷ "Boredom Test Video." Bored.com. Web. 19 May 2012. <http://www.bored.com/game/play/151901/Boredom_Test_Video.html>.

⁶⁸ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 30

⁶⁹ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 17

the center of focus, the stronger the insistence on meaning amongst the trivialities of everyday life will become... Boredom is not connected with actual needs but with desire. And this desire is a desire for sensory *stimuli*. Stimuli are the only 'interesting' thing"⁷⁰

4.2) PLAYING VIDEO GAMES BRINGS BOREDOM

So far, I have set the basis to explore the problem of boredom and video games. Now, let us continue with the study of boredom that comes as a result of repetition and excess, as the result playing video games till exhaustion. *Boredom of surfeit* is "any experience that's repeated and repeated until you're fed up, until you are replete and stuffed".⁷¹

I have found a little gold mine of comments posted on Internet that illustrate some gamers' casual thoughts about this particular mode of boredom. On April 14, 2010, the gamer Vigorousjammer said:

*"Every now and then I end up getting all bored by video games. There's no logical reason for this, but whenever I get into one of these ruts I sit down and pick up a controller, try to find something interesting to play, and after about 10 minutes I just shut the console off. I'm currently in one of these ruts, it usually lasts for a week or two and then I come back, I guess I'm just wondering if anybody else has ever experienced anything like this, or if I'm the only one."*⁷²

I could not have found a more genuine, touching and real description of such state. The most compelling aspect is Vigorousjammer's concern about feeling bored by video games. Definitely, he is worried enough to bring the subject and discuss it with other players. It is crucial to note what was inevitable from the beginning: postponing boredom instead of dealing with it pays off. First, a quick look at Vigorousjammer's blog reveals that he is a real gamer... (I wonder if he is a victim of existential boredom). Apparently, he has played so much that his usual excitement for video games has faded away, which is sad in a way. It might feel like a void to lose interest in something that one truly loves. He might have felt relieved to realize that, at least, he is not the only one. The 18 responses he got are no less candid and sincere. These replies are a real testimony of the workings of boredom. Let us observe and discuss them.

⁷⁰ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 27

⁷¹ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P.13

⁷² "Vigorousjammer (Level 32)." *Video Game Boredom?* Web. 07 May 2012.
<<http://www.giantbomb.com/profile/vigorousjammer/video-game-boredom/30-44512/>>.

Metal_Gear_Sunny: I'm going through a thing where I don't even want to touch a game for a few weeks.

SilentCommando: Yeah, I get this occasionally but it goes away after a few days.

SadPatrol: yeah, happens to me too.

Napalm: I had this last night (and subsequently still have it). I wanted to play something, but I felt so bored with everything, I didn't actually want to play anything.

Nintendoeats: I get this with everything, it's called ADD.

Linkster7: Yes, this is common I guess. Had it multiple times, sometimes one day sometimes one week.

Jason_E_Sigler: If this happens to you with a specific game, stop playing that game. If it's an overall feeling of meh, you're playing too many games.

Lawrens: Happens with any hobby to be honest. It's usually best to have multiple hobbies you could do for your free time. I don't even game that much and I get bored of them easily. Choosing the right games helps too.

EVO: The thing about video games is that even the most mindless of games still require some level of active participation. Thus, unlike a film or a CD for example, they're not passive entertainment.

CornontheCobbe: Happens to me a lot actually, funnily enough.

Zudthespud: I get it frequently, usually lasts a couple of days every month or so. I just listen to a shit tonne of music and spend more time on the internet.

Angelkanarias: I just ask myself what's the point sometimes. I guess that's more existentialist problems I have.

Spankingaddict: sometimes...

FluxWaveZ: It's normal.

Bioderm: Go outside do sports or something else, you can't just always do the same thing even when you won't be bored of video games it's a good thing to balance with sports at least 30minutes-1h a day

ShadowKing7: Yeah, that happens to me and probably to most people every now and then. Could come from having a lot of games and being able to buy them yourself, because I know I never had these types of ruts as a kid when I played games. I usually end up spending more time on this site or listen to music, and the feeling will go away after a day or two.

Tireyo643: I can summarize my comment in two replies made by two GB users.

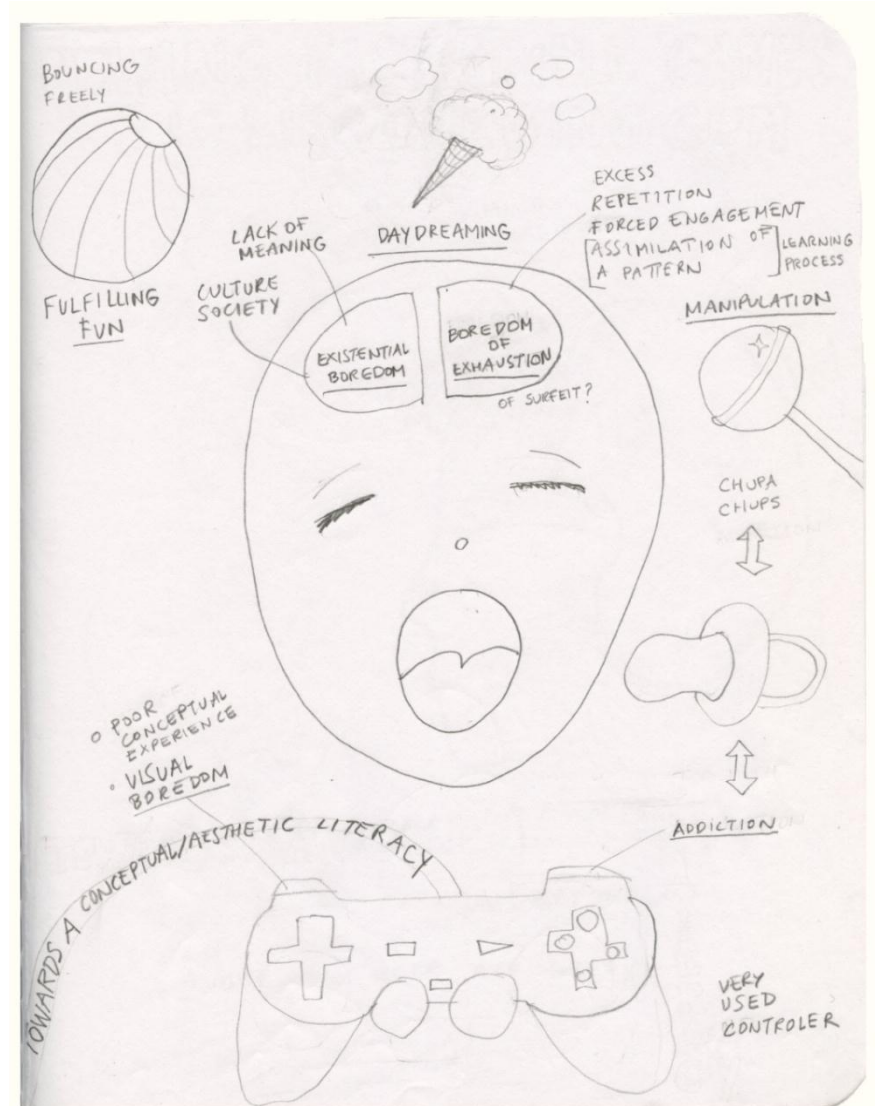
@FluxWaveZ: "It's normal." And this... **@Metal_Gear_Sunny:** "I'm going through a thing where I don't even want to touch a game for a few weeks."

I've been so busy, just haven't had the time to touch them.

SPACETURTLE: Yeah, dude. This happens to me all the time. I am right in the middle of one of those now myself. Guess it's more semi-boredom at the time thou, since it's not like I turn off the console or quit the game, it's just that it ain't all that fun as it usually is to play. But sometimes I am also so bored by games I don't even bother to start them up.

The fact that the gamers use other words –such as “thing”, “this”, “it”, “that” or “overall feeling of meeh” -- instead of boredom is quite interesting. It might imply some kind of denial or embarrassment. By the way, there is nothing more contemporary than the “feeling of meeh” to express boredom. I can only wonder about the reasons behind those uses. It might relate to the general prejudice towards boredom. Perhaps the gamers “feel that they should be able to stimulate themselves”⁷³, especially in a culture that is based in play, fun and challenge. They might feel in contradiction with the “principles” of their culture.

Clearly, the gamers are dealing with *boredom of surfeit*, which they agree it is quite normal to have. Metal_Gear_Sunny, Napalm, Zudthespud, Tireyo643, and Spaceturtle’s experiences were somehow predictable and difficult to scape: due to repetition and too much engagement with the games. They might have had enough. They do not want to play for weeks, or even months. The gamer that is especially bored is Nintendoeats for he gets bored “with everything”. I am not going to comment here about his claim of calling his boredom as ADD. Yet, of all the bored gamers there is one whose answer proves the benefits of boredom: Angelkanarias who asks himself the point of things. He claims to think about what he guesses are his most existential problems. Good for Angelkanarias who uses the void created by boredom –or the empty space, or time left— to reflect about life itself.

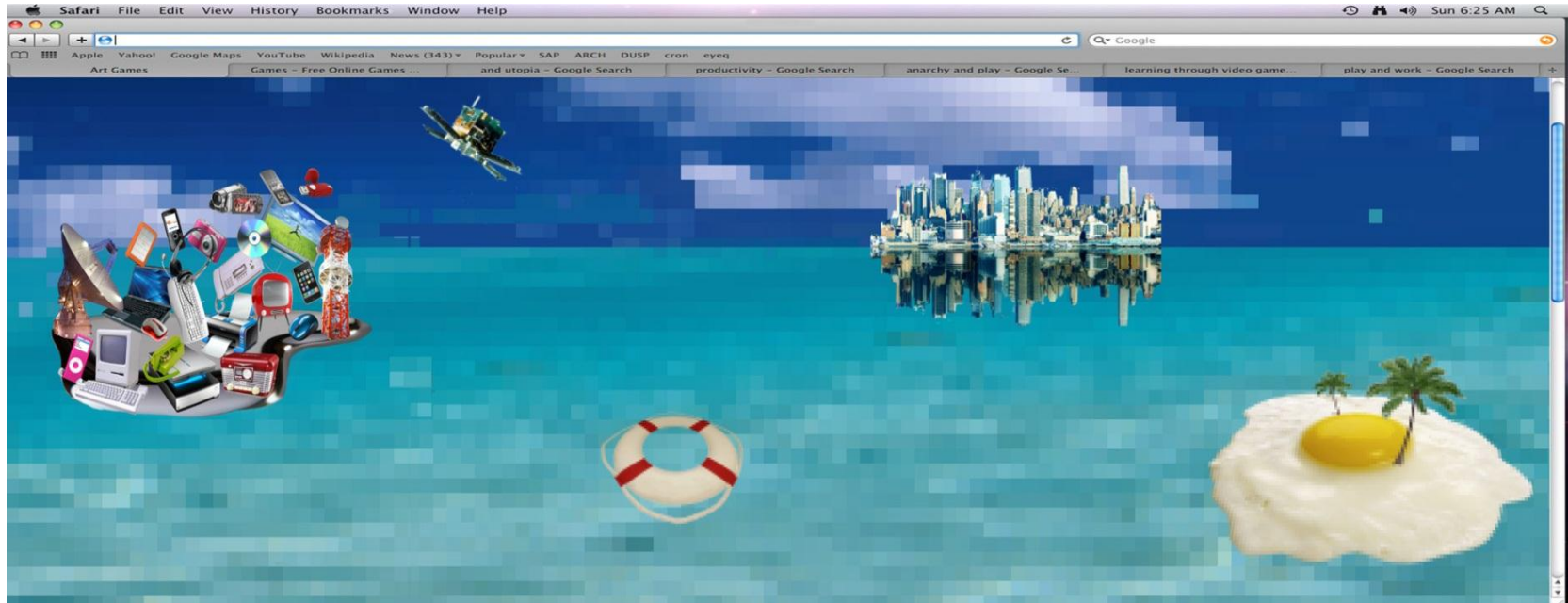


⁷³ Toohy, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. P. 11

As observed, boredom and games are intrinsically connected to one another. Boredom is one of the reasons games exist, in the same way playing video games can cause boredom. Game designers may want to consider the self-reflective potentials of boredom, and consider constraining the game to avoid the point when playing a game becomes labor. Incidentally, Peter Toohey asks: “When does the tedium of the labor start?”⁷⁴ In response I ask: At what point should a game session be over in order to avoid the “feeling of meeh”? Should the game mechanics determine this? Should the number of plays be limited and controlled by the designers? I am aware that these speculations go beyond the aims of video games conventional design and production. Nevertheless, I believe these questions could be addresses for research. I assert that boredom can be used and applied as a creative tool in learning and education, and video game design and theory. Studying boredom can also contribute and advance the understanding of how concentration and attention function in video games. Scientists are already working on how to measure boredom.

⁷⁴ Toohey, Peter. *Boredom: A Lively History*. London: Yale University Press, 2010. Print. Ibid. P. 43

5) WHERE IS THE MEANING IN THE PRODUCTIVITY, LEISURE, AND SPEED OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE?



This section introduces some questions and issues the dialectic relationship of productivity, leisure, and speed posed me, in relation to the loss of meaning, or boredom. The following text is a manifest copy-paste text collage. This unorthodox compilation of quotes and notes aims to assemble the material I found about the subject. In addition, this composition frames my approach about the conflictive relationship of productivity, leisure, and speed.

Before the information and communication technologies invaded daily life, things were very different. The rhythm of life was significantly slower, and in terms of production, less demanding. The author of the book *In the Bubble* says: "For one thing, we work longer hours in a speed society. The more the speed, the less the time. The U.S. standard of living of 1948 could be reproduced in four hours of today's earning capacity. Life in Stone Age was even easier. Then, we survived on three or four hours of work a day... Hunter

gatherers usually had to work only a few hours a day to meet their subsistence needs.”⁷⁵ “In looking at more contemporary groups of hunter-gatherers, such as the Kung people of Botswana, one sees that they hunt for only around six hours per week. Research with the San bush people of South Africa showed that they worked the equivalent of a twenty-hour week. They spent vastly more time than modern people engaged in socializing, exchanging ideas, philosophizing, and developing artistic skills. When not doing these things, they were free to dabble, sleep, or partake in anything that pleased them.”⁷⁶ “In today’s work-fixated society, this would cause many people to panic since their lives have become one-dimensional except for brief breaks from work. But the fact that modern people would not know what to do with their free time is not a statement about human nature. Instead, it is an indictment of modern life and the way in which it funnels far too much human energy into work...”⁷⁷ Nowadays, the wired individual is confronted by an increasing amount of tasks generated by the wide range of emergent hardware and software technologies: from digital devices with software applications to Internet platforms of virtual communities. With mobile phones, he calls, chats, and sends text messages, images and even videos to his friends. He also listens to the radio, takes pictures, watches TV, shoots videos, and plays games. If the phone has Internet, he reads and replies emails, navigates the Internet, watches videos, makes free phone calls anywhere in the planet, updates information on webpages, blogs, and virtual communities. With computers, he creates multimedia products, writes papers, makes calculations, buys almost anything, creates images, edits videos, uploads and downloads information: videos, music, video games, pictures, books, text documents, and shares documents. In a virtual community, besides chatting or sharing information, the individual dances, visits his virtual friends, swims with them, or builds new worlds. Even if this list falls short, it gives an idea of the routines the average technologized/wired individual is confronted to in the XXIst century. Telecommunication and computer technologies are transforming and shaping the way humans live and see the world.

“In his book *The Rapture of Maturity*, Charles Hayes writes that the primitive intellect was almost certainly much more active than what we find in the anti-intellectual modern age. Our immense inheritance of technology and information can create the illusion that we are mental giants by comparison to early people. But Hayes makes the case that, from that standpoint of the rapture that a well-exercised mind can deliver, the primitive environment was far superior to that of consumer culture with its steady diet of intellectual shortcuts and brain/numbing distractions. It offered more ongoing challenges and was a richer foundation for curiosity, exploration and wonder. Few things are more closely associated with happiness than these. The native landscape was a perpetual classroom that nor

⁷⁵ Thackara, John. *In the Bubble*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2005. Print. P. 33-34

⁷⁶ Schumaker, John. *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Print. P. 81

⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 82

only edified but also fostered a genuine maturity. Hayes makes the following comparison between our early ancestors and the modern person whose mind has ceased to be a source of happiness.”⁷⁸

The common characteristic of the aforementioned technologies’ evolution is their aim to become friendlier, more efficient, and faster, which in the end, increases the amount of work and accelerates “Many of us want faster computers, but we also want to live more balanced lives –lives lived at speeds we determine, not at speeds dictated by the logic of systems beyond our control.”⁷⁹ Admittedly, it is not the technologies themselves that increase the amount of work but humans who demand more. David E. Nye says: “...the question of the new millennium... is ‘Why has work become more demanding?’”⁸⁰ Then adds that “one of the explanations for why people work harder is that they are being exploited”⁸¹

In the light of this apparent exploitation, the questions are: Is the individual aware of this exploitation? How does he cope with it? Does he resist the demands, or does he simply adapt himself accordingly? In the past, workers would not accept an increase of demands. “It is little wonders that generations of workers rebelled against the factory, rejecting not only the long hours and low wages but also the monotonous routine and the loss of autonomy.”⁸² For example, in the context of the creation of Ford’s assembly line (1913), “workers were voting with their feet (...) against the accelerating pace of work. Although the assembly line radically reduced the time needed to assemble a car, workers found the repetitive labor mindnumbing.”⁸³ “As craft production was largely replaced by assembly line that did not allow for any creativity, no place was left for positive aspects of daydreaming. It not only became associated with laziness, but also with danger.”⁸⁴ In respect to work, Lars Svendsen says: “And there is no escaping the fact that many forms of work are deadly boring. Work is often onerous, often without potential to promote any meaning in life. The answer to the question as to why people get bored does not lie in work or leisure on their own. One can have a lot of leisure without being noticeably bored, and one can have only a little leisure and be bored to death. The fact that by increasing profits from production in modern industry it has been possible to shorten working hours and prolong leisure does not necessarily lead to any improvement in the quality of life. Boredom is not a question of idleness but of meaning.”⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Schumaker, John. *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Print. P. 57

⁷⁹ Thackara, John. *In the Bubble*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2005. Print. P. 39

⁸⁰ Nye, E. David. *Technology Matters*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007. Print. P. 129

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid. P. 113

⁸³ Thackara, John. *In the Bubble*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2005. Print. P. 116-117

⁸⁴ "Daydream." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation. Web. 18 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daydream>>.

⁸⁵ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 34

Ford's system of production and other similar ones augmented productivity but generated "unemployment". "In the era of "silent" films, professional musicians had regular employment in the movie theaters. No more. Most telephone operators have disappeared, replaced by automatic switchboards. Many bank tellers have disappeared, replaced by automatic bank teller machines. Computer programs have replaced many white-collar workers, allowing Internet users to file forms, pay bills, and make applications online."⁸⁶ From about 1930 to 1980... Americans conducted an intense debate over technological unemployment. Manufacturers and engineers consistently argued that technology is the source of progress, asserting that job losses are only temporary displacements. Most jobs eliminated are repetitious and menial, while some of those created, such as machine building or computer programming, require imagination and skill."⁸⁷ This job is executed by what "Richard Reich calls 'symbolic analysts' – 'people who solve, identify, and broker new problems'. In the borderless world economy, they are in great demand. Their work is not routine but varied and interesting, which explains why many of them are 'workaholics'."⁸⁸ "Corporations have found that such employees will work especially long hours if food and coffee are freely available, and if they provide other amenities such as small kitchens, exercise rooms, and jogging paths. At Microsoft, refrigerators are perpetually stocked with free soft drinks and sandwiches. Far from seeking a life of leisure, the most highly educated often embrace an almost ascetic routine of long hours punctuated by physical workouts. Such habits are widespread in Silicon Valley and in other high-tech communities."⁸⁹ (This happens at the MediaLab.)

In respect to workaholism, Schumaker says: "Wedding oneself to ceaseless work is not a sign of intelligence. It can even thwart the creative workings of the unconscious, which thrives on idleness. Many of the world's greatest discoveries and insights were born from indolence and unstructured musings. Einstein, a devoted daydreamer, once said that the happiest thought of his life came to him while languishing in a daydream. This thought, in which he pondered the feeling of weightlessness that would be experienced if someone were to leap off a roof, eventually led to his theory of general relativity. By contrast, hitching one's wagon to workaholism destroys the freedom that is so necessary to happiness."⁹⁰ "Even laziness, which has an undeservedly bad reputation, serves an important role in happiness and health. All top predators have evolved tendencies to laze about for periods of time. This is especially true of big-brained creatures such as human beings. Big brains crave idleness just as much as they do stimulation. If they do not get it, they begin to function like small brains."⁹¹

⁸⁶ Nye, E. David. *Technology Matters*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007. Print. P. 118

⁸⁷ Ibid. P. 120

⁸⁸ Ibid. P. 133

⁸⁹ Ibid. P. 134

⁹⁰ Schumaker, John. *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Print. P. 81

⁹¹ Ibid. P. 81

The questions about those who are prone to work longer hours are: Is technology helping them develop and grow as a person? Are they closer to their meaning because they work more? Are they happier or simply busier? How do they use their leisure time on a daily basis? Why would they work more? What is their perception of time?

“An accelerating pace of life scrambles our sense of time. Many of our daily activities are now governed by the so-called objective time of clocks in factories, schools, offices, and transport systems. As we pass through and interact with these systems, we are exposed to a huge amount of sensory stimulation, but we lose contact with the lived time, the natural time, of our ancestors, whose genetic makeup persists in our bodies. Most of us have experienced some of the ways time affects how we feel. Levine says that two hundred physiological changes take place on a daily basis and have an impact on our health. Researchers and pharmaceutical companies discovered in the 1980s that by dosing medications in synchrony with rhythms in these processes they could optimize the therapeutic benefit of medications. This time-based approach to disease treatment is known as *chronotherapy*, in which medications are prescribed to be taken at specific times in synchrony with the body’s circadian rhythms.”⁹²

“According to the psychologist David Winnicott, the loss of temporality engendered by modern life is also a feature of psychotic and deprived individual who have lost the ability to connect the past with the present. The bridging of the present into the past, and not the future, says Winnicott, is a crucial dimension of psychic integration and health. By scrambling our mind-and-body clocks, speed society creates de preconditions for psychosis.”⁹³

“Many recent surveys report that stress and unhappiness have increased among office workers in the West during the same years that ‘disintermediation’⁹⁴ and other forms of automation have been on the increase. Time is a key issue for the information society –but perpetual acceleration is not a given.”⁹⁵ “Business shows some signs of a return to slowness –thanks in large part to a revalorization of time as an element of trust. During the dot-com years, it was thought that ‘disintermediating’ people from business processes would improve efficiency and reduce costs... But experience has shown that relationships based on the development of mutual trust through time remain the vital essence that makes markets work. Social ties and personal relationships that have developed

⁹² Thackara, John. *In the Bubble*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2005. Print. P. 34

⁹³ Ibid. P. 35

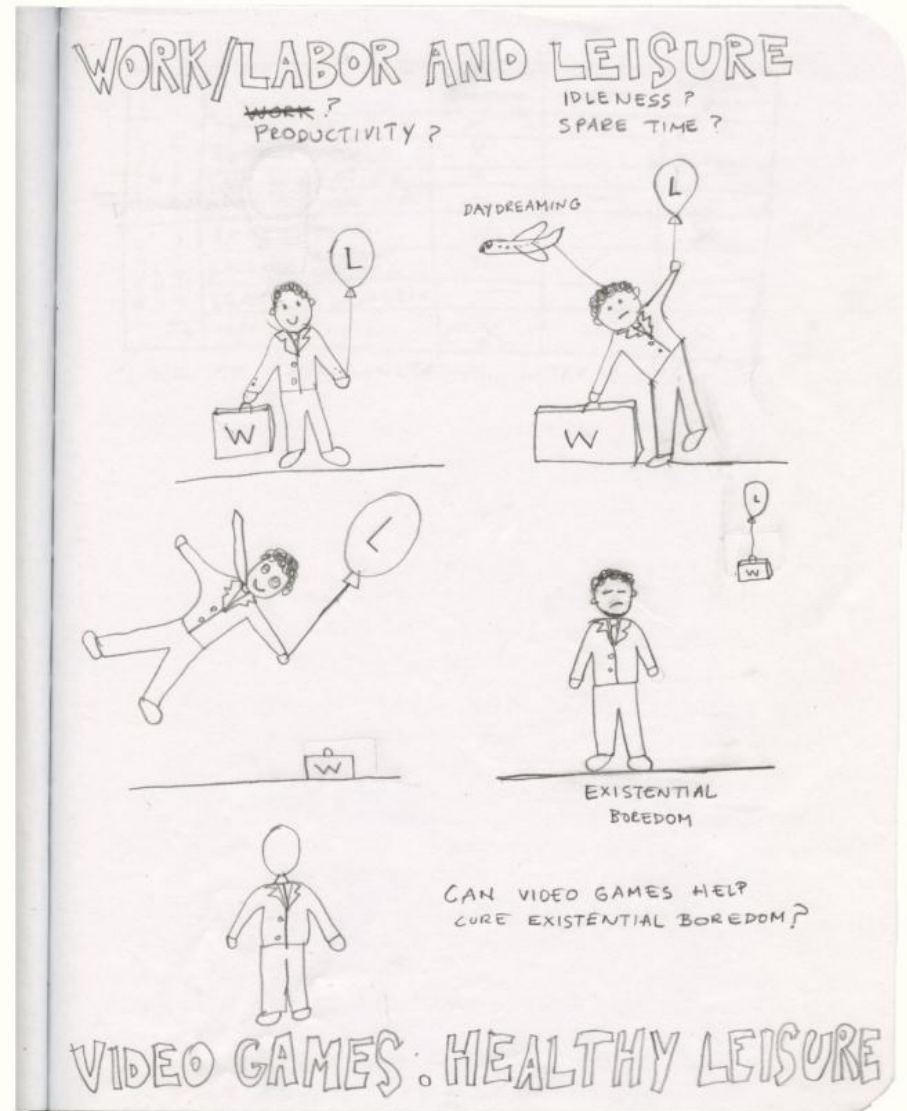
⁹⁴ “In economics, disintermediation is the removal of intermediaries in a supply chain.” “Disintermediation.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, May 2012. Web. 7 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disintermediation>>.

⁹⁵ Thackara, John. *In the Bubble*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2005. Print. Ibid. P. 43

slowly through time have proved to be as valuable as brute speed in many industries that experimented in disintermediation.”⁹⁶

“Ivan Illich described the speed issue as a prison, out of which there is no exit, when it’s presented as an either/or choice: “We discuss fast and slow, enduring and destructive speed. We fantasize about becoming ‘slowbies.’ We speak of the good life as a slow life. But it’s not about being fast versus being slow. It’s about being Here, being Now, being –and that is the English word–Quick. You know what the word ‘quicken’ meant: the first kick of a baby in the belly of a woman. ‘Quicken’ meant: coming alive, quick. We might be already beyond the age of speed by having moved into the age of –and I say the word with a certain trembling–‘real time’. The move toward real-time is one way out of the world of speed.”⁹⁷

“We all feel the need to slow down sometimes, to tune into natural rhythms, connect more fully with our actions, add quality to our experiences... When we spend time over a task, it shows. If we take things slowly, and step outside set schedules and routines to seek independent cycles, we find continuity.”⁹⁸



⁹⁶ Thackara, John. *In the Bubble*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2005. Print. P. 42

⁹⁷ Ibid. P. 45

⁹⁸ Ibid.

5.1.➤ BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE MENTALITY OF VIDEO GAMES' PIONEERS: PLAY, PRODUCTIVITY AND LEISURE

This section presents a brief historical –and somehow anecdotal– introduction to the mentality of video game pioneers. Their life philosophy regarded play and leisure as fundamental parts of life. Unquestionably, a conventional, rigid mentality that regards play only for children or immature adults, games as a waste of time, or life as a serious business could not have created video games. Video games' pioneers, however, were not naïve; they also saw business in play and games. For instance, Nolan Bushnell –founder and first **ATARI** owner- is considered the father of video games' industry. His entrepreneurial carefree vision introduced a (new) model of game production that blended leisure and productivity.

Definitely, video game' pioneers must have had a broader vision to believe and set the conditions for the development of a new form of entertainment and play. Let's do not forget that belief (in the sense of conviction) is fundamental in the creation of any business or of any type of undertaking. For example, during the 1950s, "almost as soon as anybody started exploring the idea (of merging computers and games⁹⁹) they walked away convinced it was a waste of time."¹⁰⁰ A decade later, a group of MIT students had a different vision of what computers could be used for, and probably a distinct generational idea of play and productivity, "they rejected the po-faced formality of their professors and saw programming as fun and creative rather than staid and serious."¹⁰¹ (I could not love this historical fact more.)

Making a magical academic jump to the West-Coast, we have Nolan Bushnell –again– who in 1962, "enrolled in the University of Utah. As a freshman, he wrote a term paper stating his philosophy for an interesting existence: it expressed a constant need for change and a wanderlust that would punctuate his life: 'I said that a bright person should be able to fundamentally master any discipline in three years-mastery meaning to hit the 90-percentile level. To become a truly immersed master, if you would, you could spend the rest of your life on the last 10 percent. But I felt that I wanted to be constantly on that 90 percent curve, which required me to keep changing venues. The way to have an interesting life is to stay on the steep part of the learning curve.' Bushnell describes himself as having received "two educations". After losing his tuition money in a poker game, he took a job running arcade games at Lagoon, an amusement park located north of Salt Lake City."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Note of the author

¹⁰⁰ Donovan, Tristan. *Replay: The History of Video Games*. East Sussex UK: Yellow Ant, 2010. Print. P. 9

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Kent, Steven L. *The Ultimate History of Video Games*. New York: Three Rivers Publishing, 2001. Print.

Some years later, Bushnell was “surfing” with the dissimilarities he encountered with the investors for his games. I am talking about the culture clash, and the discrepancies of their vision of leisure and productivity. This is also a clash between play and seriousness. In this sense, the adventurous, explorative, playful, and scientific approach of game designers, programmers and engineers had been crucial for the development of video game industry, and of course its culture. It is not surprising that the free spirit of play hides behind the history of video games.

According to *The Ultimate History of Video Games* the first generations of **ATARI** coin-operated video games were produced by a bunch of hippies, junkies and long-haired bikers (as described by former executives) wearing jeans, t-shirts, walking barefoot and smoking marijuana at the **ATARI**'s assembly headquarters.¹⁰³ They were hired by Bushnell, who looked like a biker or a hippie himself, except that he was in charge of an entire company that would later become a millionaire success. He was managing **ATARI** as successfully and efficiently as any other “suit and tie” looking entrepreneur of the business world of his time. To make things more difficult he had a particular working style too: “he preferred working smart and fun to working hard.” In this respect, “Ray Kassar, [one of the executives at **ATARI**] found very little common ground. Kassar, who routinely arrived at 7:30 a.m., did not approve of Bushnell’s work”¹⁰⁴ ethics and aesthetics. They [Bushnell and his crew]¹⁰⁵ held meetings in hot tubs, drank heavily, experimented with drugs, and named projects after sexy female employees [Author’s note: not amused by the latter]. Sometimes **ATARI** board meetings seemed more like fraternity parties than business meetings”.¹⁰⁶ In the context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, these “particularities” often interfered in Bushnell’s search for financial aid. Nevertheless, the difficulties never impaired Bushnell’s determination or modified his peculiar style. As a matter of fact, even when he found the capital or had the venture capitalists working with him, the production environment and the use of time did not change much at **ATARI**. The emancipated carefree corporate philosophy would become the cultural “trademark” behind **ATARI**. Following, the reader will find an amusing anecdote of culture clash in the early days of the company:

“One day, a number of Sears’s executives visited the new location for an inspection in suits and ties. (...) By the end of the day, Bushnell was concerned that he alienated his visitors. (...) In an effort to look more professional, Bushnell had his board attend the scheduled dinner dressed in suits and ties. Unfortunately, the Sears executives, too, were worried about the impression they had made. Not wanting to appear too stuffy, they attended the dinner in T-shirts and blue jeans.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Kent, Steven L. *The Ultimate History of Video Games*. New York: Three Rivers Publishing, 2001. Print. P. 52

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. P. 110

¹⁰⁵ Note of the author

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. P. 56

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. P. 85 -86

6› DAYDREAMING, THE TRUE ANARCHIST AND HOW CREATIVITY 'REDEEMS' ROUTINE AND REPETITION

This chapter aims to show how routine and repetition triggers creativity in the context of everyday life. "The mundane" functions as the perfect setting where imagination becomes creativity, rendering more subtle and unmediated "outcomes" than artistic or scientific ones. This text also examines some creative acts generated within daily habits or tasks, and frames daydreaming as a natural vehicle to go on an excursion to the mental worlds of the individual. Daydreaming is presented here as a coercive fantasy that defies boredom, monotony, tedium, repetition, and routine. I argue that daydreaming uncovers the true wishes, fantasies, desires, dreams of the individual, this is: the needs, urges, aspirations of his real self. Examining, following and materializing them encounters him with his meaning.

Scientifically speaking, the methodological approximation for this research is based on the *Creative Cognition* approach which is "...concerned with identifying the conditions under which creative discovery is likely to occur."¹⁰⁸ With a little twist, my method consists in concentrating on a condition where creativity is less likely to happen –or where it apparently seems less prone to occur - as in the case of the rote.

In addition, I argue that ordinary cognitive processes can turn into outstanding acts of creativity: "...the difference between mundane, everyday acts of creativity and acts of extreme creativity is one of degree, rather than kind."¹⁰⁹ This differentiation frames creativity as a general cognitive principle that regards the artistic, scientific or the *everyday creativity* as belonging to the same cognitive system, although, they might vary in the "intensity" of their conscious activity: e.g. the artistic creative process in comparison to the immediate implementation of ideas in daily life. Artists learn to develop and use their creative skills but they also train them regularly. Thus, making "more" or "less" creative outcomes might be a matter of practice. Probably, it depends on how truly interested a person is in her creative subject, or if she has the urge to communicate something. The context (time and place) where creation takes place is fundamental too. The essential difference between the artistic and the *everyday creativity* relates to the context in which they occur. The latter is not established like a language, as art is. Daily creativity does not aim at dialoguing with history as art does, and finally it is not informed with the knowledge of a semiotic domain, as art is. Note that art is the ultimate realm of creativity.

¹⁰⁸ Finke, Ronald; Ward, Thomas & Smith, Steven. *Creative Cognition: Theory, Research and Applications*. Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1992. Print. P. 3

¹⁰⁹ "Mixing Memory." *Creative Cognition: Ordinary, Observable, and Unconscious*. Web. 13 May 2012.
<<http://mixingmemory.blogspot.com/2004/11/creative-cognition-ordinary-observable.html>>.

Hence, setting this search for the whereabouts of creativity in the realm of daily life —instead of the context of the “creative domains” by definition (art and science) — aims at celebrating, by rendering visible, the ‘insignificant’, ‘irrelevant’, ‘unimportant’, prosaic aspects of life that humans might take for granted. Similarly, this investigation is based the authors Finke, Ward and Smith’s belief that “there is much more to be learned by exploring ways of inspiring creative discovery in ordinary people” than concentrating on creative genius alone.¹¹⁰ Scrutinizing the apparently unimportant little things of life —that nevertheless provide us with a minimal sense of direction and security in our lives every day— turns to be a beautiful existential exercise and an enriching experience for the self.

Even if routines appear as unlikely grounds for creativity to emerge, or are not considered creative, they should not be discarded from the spectrum of creativity. In fact, routines activate creativity by opposition. In order to prove this point, I begin by outlining the meaning of routine. The on-line free dictionary by *Farlex*, defines it as “a course of normative, standardized actions or procedures that are followed regularly, often repetitiously”¹¹¹ . For the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary routine is a “habitual or mechanical performance of an established procedure.”¹¹²

Some examples of standardized repetitive mechanical actions found in quotidian life are: brushing the teeth, tying shoe laces, buttoning, putting make up on, combing the hair, hand washing, shaving, making the bed, folding clothes and many others. To illustrate a regular, repetitive procedure in detail, I have deconstructed the buttoning of a shirt as a sequence of instructions (in the way I personally do it).

1. - Hold the first button on top of the shirt with your left hand (or with the right hand if the shirt is for men).
2. - With your right hand, bring the other side of the shirt close to the button.
3. - Let the button pass through the buttonhole with your left hand.
4. - Pull the button with your right hand until it lies flat over the side of the shirt.
5. - Repeat the operation with the next buttons.

What has this deconstruction revealed? A routine within the rote, or a set of operations required in order to execute one. It is paradoxically comforting that a routine is not implemented in the exact same way every time— which actually, is not that obvious . Things slightly change from one day to another, since our life circumstances vary on a daily basis. Sometimes, the buttoning’s

¹¹⁰ Finke, R.A.; Ward, T.B. and Smith, S.M. *Creative Cognition: Theory, Research and Applications*. Boston MA: MIT Press, 1992. Print. P. 29

¹¹¹ "Routine." *The Free Dictionary*. Farlex. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/routine>>.

¹¹² "Routine." *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/routine>>.

speed/velocity might change because we are rushing. Other times, it may slow down because we are sleepy. Mistakes happen too, as when we skip a buttonhole. Of course, these events occur unconsciously and remain unnoticed because buttoning is a mechanical procedure. Nevertheless, the particularly repetitive, somehow invariable nature of routine provides humans with enough mental space—free time—to think about other things, namely to daydream which is a constructive way to produce creative thoughts.

At the same time, routine's fixed structure challenges our creativity, forcing us to use our creative skills to cope with repetition or monotony. Additionally, the rote has a function in our lives: it helps us maintaining a certain order or rhythm in our lives. It gives us the sense of security that things can remain stable. It keeps pushing the almost imperceptible mechanisms of the small tasks that humans need to do every day, to carry on with the bigger 'assignments' set by contemporary life.

6.1> DAYDREAMING: THE ANARCHIST CREATIVITY

Here, I will examine daydreaming as a vehicle that allows humans to deal with the boredom of routine by means of escaping, or traveling to their inner worlds. In this regard, Paul César Helleu¹¹³ says: "a daydream is a visionary fantasy, especially one of happy, pleasant thoughts, hopes or ambitions, imagined as coming to pass, and experienced while awake."¹¹⁴ Daydreaming can eventually refer to diverse mental experiences or tasks such as: visualizing future events, fantasizing with present imagery, and conscious dreaming.

Furthermore, because daydreaming has a pre-conscious nature, it is a creative act in its own. It produces immaterial outcomes that remain in the mental territories of the daydreamer. Phrased differently, the transformative act of creation, corresponds to an organized cognitive exploration that forms mental moving images. The *lucid daydreamer*¹¹⁵ expresses his individuality to himself by visualizing his wishes, desires, ideas, relationships, fantasies, or 'things' that may seem far or difficult to happen, or that are impossible in reality. "...Sports psychologists have used this knowledge for years without making the connection to daydreaming. They would have

¹¹³ French artist (1859 – 1927).

¹¹⁴ "Daydream." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daydream>>.

¹¹⁵ Note the difference between *lucid daydreaming* and *lucid dreaming*. The latter is "also known as a conscious dream, is where the dreamer becomes aware that they are dreaming while the dream is in progress." In a lucid dream, the waking mind continues gaining control. "Different Types of Dreams." Web. 7 May 2012. <<http://www.dream-interpretation.org.uk/types-of-dreams/different-types-of-dreams.htm>>.

sports people visualize success.”¹¹⁶ Nowadays, this form of daydreaming is called *visualization* or *guided imagery*. The following example of a woman’s morning routine portrays the role of guided imagery in the production of immaterial outcomes. I found this sample in the book *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*.

“I always daydream for twenty minutes every morning when I put on makeup. I don’t really remember what I used to think about, but it has turned into some kind of meditation, that I can’t live without, because it makes me feel good about myself. (...) This is the time when I fantasize about positive things that might happen.”¹¹⁷

Certainly, I do not know what this woman’s daydreams, or immaterial outcomes, are about. Yet, I find the human mind’s ability to naturally engage in creative processes while performing routines fascinating. Daydreaming is such a beautiful mental gesture. It is like a short vacation to a place where things go smoothly and everything is fine. It is a safe summer trip. Daydreaming operates like a mechanism of defense. It protects human’s mental health by producing rather pleasant thoughts. Daydreams are the agitators that bother and defeat the boredom of monotony, the boredom of surfeit. The critic and essayist Jonathan Crary regards daydreaming as a “...domain of resistance internal to any system of routinization or coercion.”¹¹⁸ He also says “...it has always been a crucial but indeterminate part of the politics of everyday life.”¹¹⁹ In other words, daydreaming arranges our tickets to escape to a “feeling good” location or the context of an exciting adventure. While we are relaxing on a beach seat and contemplating the sunset, our body and brain do the “dirty” job of repetition.

This form of creativity is a subtle act of anarchy that subverts the reality of the daydreamer, temporarily. In this way, humans turn into the successful runaways or mavericks that defy the demands of productivity. Our anarchist creativity challenges the authoritarian fixed order of tedious work (e.g. assembly line, or processing factories), of ‘uninteresting’ repetitive tasks (e.g. scanning items in a supermarket checker, delivering leaflets door-to-door, selling tickets in the movies), of never ending inert jobs that lifeguards, truck drivers, museum guards, and elevator operators have to do, and lastly, of the routines of simple and plain daily life. Fernando Pessoa’s¹²⁰ dromomaniac fugitive hero Bernardo is the perfect example of a daydreamer. Bernardo is the bored bookkeeper who “never

¹¹⁶ "Daydream." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daydream>>.

¹¹⁷ Ehn, Billy and Lofgren, Orvar. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print. P. 98

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Crary (1999:77) quoted in Ehn, Billy and Lofgren, Orvar. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print. P. 137

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Portuguese poet, writer and literary critic (1888 -1935).

ventures outside Lisbon, but in his mind he travels everywhere.”¹²¹ Actually, it is in his mind where his eventless life becomes an exciting journey.

Next, I will examine the pertinent question of what induces or provokes daydreaming. Apparently, this mental event is triggered by the dreamer’s immediate context: his surroundings, which have a material and tangible nature. The mind transforms the materials of reality by associating, distorting, re-arranging, and blending them with the dreamer’s imaginary or ‘fantastic’ world. Through these mechanisms, the brain produces the outcomes called daydreams.

The authors of *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*, designate as *daydreaming props*¹²² to the materials found in the daydreamer’s context, that get transformed into intangible daydreaming entities. The aim of this designation helps shape the mechanics inherent to daydreaming. The meticulous research of Prof. Billy Ehn and Prof. Orvar Lofgren, enlightens this paper as it reveals the immaterial creative acts rendered in the learning process of a professional daydreamer: “The sofa becomes a cart, the flowery carpet a jungle...” while “...the sounds from the streets at twilight help him exit into dreams. As he learns to read, new material opens up.”¹²³ I argue that these insignificant, unimportant –yet beautiful- mental “chunks” are creative products on their own, regardless of their intangibility. As a matter of fact, they resemble what we understand by ideas. These mental images could easily function like photographs or scenes in movies created by ordinary human beings –with probably a bit “boring” lives but- with exuberant imaginations.

One of the essential contributions of the Swedish academics, to the understanding of creativity, is the inclusion of the physical world, and the consideration of the daydreamers’ cultural context as the material source that supply his fantasies. Another aspect suggested in *The Secret World of Doing Nothing* linked to creativity, refers to the paradoxical relationship between mental concentration and daydreaming. “A research about attention span has shown...” that “...the more people are asked to focus, the greater the risk that they will escape into daydreaming.”¹²⁴ Surprisingly enough, a study “published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences...* shows that our brains are very active when we daydream – much more active than when we focus on routine tasks.”¹²⁵ The same study asserts that activity in some areas of the brain, like in those that execute problem-solving tasks, increases during daydreams. This

¹²¹ Ehn, Billy and Lofgren, Orvar. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print. P. 130

¹²² Ibid. P. 137

¹²³ Ibid. P. 128

¹²⁴ Jonathan Crary (1999:77) quoted in Ehn, Billy and Lofgren, Orvar. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print. P. 128

¹²⁵ "Brain's Problem-Solving Function At Work When We Daydream." *ScienceDaily*. ScienceDaily, 11 May 2009. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/05/090511180702.htm>>.

cognitive discovery confirms that creative ideas/thoughts arise when a person is daydreaming, or that it is eventually possible to find solutions to problems after wandering in our inner worlds.

In conclusion, these studies suggest that because the brain works on a full-time basis and has no rest at all, the mind needs to take breaks. The brain heads in direction to where it can wander freely. Routine, repetition or monotony provide with the perfect space/condition for daydreaming, since routines become patterns that the mind recognizes and reproduces automatically. Hence, work and labor, results crucial for creativity and wandering to happen. It has been demonstrated that ceaseless work, for instance, "...can even thwart the creative workings of the unconscious, which thrives on idleness."¹²⁶

Incidentally, it is curious that idea of 'work' was born along with agriculture, when men did not have any other option than cultivating the soil to combat famine. 'Work' meant to spend "...one's energies in an otherwise unpleasant and unnatural way out of necessity."¹²⁷ Precisely, humans use creativity to revert the unpleasant aspects of work and labor. In some cultures, people sing and play while they work in order to make their activity more pleasing and even enjoyable. The Ladakhis, an ethnic group that lives in the region of Jammu and Kashmir, sing: 'make it easy, easy does it' as they harvest¹²⁸. This fact makes me question if the mind is actually playing when it daydreams and if daydreaming is a biological form of play. A couple of questions that remain pending about these subject are: Why does the mind choose to wander, as opposed to executing other mental activities? At what point while performing repetitive actions a person starts daydreaming? Is wandering a search for freedom or happiness? Is creativity a form of freedom?

6.2) HOW CREATIVITY 'REDEEMS' ROUTINE AND REPETITION

Human beings naturally avoid routine's inclination towards repetition. However, repetition or monotony challenge and push the brain to use its 'creative powers' to manage with the boredom caused by tedious patterns. The brain copes with the issue by 'redeeming' a routine. In other words, the person reconfigures a specific action, or executes it differently: speeding it up, for instance. This "conceptual" operation implies an amount of conscious effort. The person needs to get used to a new/different form of executing a habit. Mostly, this procedure constitutes a significant creative act designated to modify a system. Let's examine the illustration below:

¹²⁶ Schumaker, John. *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Print. P. 81

¹²⁷ Ibid. P. 86

¹²⁸ Ibid. P. 251

“Frank found that he could save four seconds by buttoning his vest from the bottom up instead of top to bottom. He used two shaving brushes to speed up shaving, and experimented with double razors, but found that he lost extra time by the frequent instances when he had to bandage cuts.”¹²⁹

Buttoning a vest from the bottom to the top might not be the ultimate creative act, indeed. Nevertheless, the subtlety of conducting a research on the insignificant labors of everyday life, to develop a system to save some time is creative. My *Philosophy of Creativity* professor is right in asserting that “creativity is not the same as imagination or the acquisition of knowledge. The creative process is a way of using them.”¹³⁰ Following Prof. Singer’s assertion, I conclude that Frank’s example is not about what he discovered: saving 4 seconds, but how he figured it out: inverting the buttoning of his vest. The twist of this ‘petty’ gesture resembles and reminds me pretty much to *conceptual art*. Frank’s discovery might even be as relevant as a piece of art because it modifies reality in an ultimate subtle way. It proposes a different or unique perspective. Anyway, supposing that our daily-life-deconstructor wears a vest every single day of the year, he would be saving a total of 1460 seconds, or 24 minutes of real time. It is 24 minutes of life. Admittedly, the buttoning routine has not become less repetitive but what matters is that it can be executed differently. At least, Frank has two choices to execute his daily buttoning, and one is faster.

In addition, a fine creative strategy of this sort transforms a prosaic/ordinary act into a more meaningful one. When a routine acquires a specific meaning, it is easier for a person to carry it on. At least, until this ‘new’ significant becomes meaningless by exhaustion. Then, it would need another reconfiguration. Humans do this on a constant basis. The need to reconfigure is a search for meaning, and meaning is key for human existence. Lars Svendsen said: meaningless is boring, and boredom can be described metaphorically as a meaning withdrawal.¹³¹ [I have mentioned this concept earlier, in the Method of Understanding (see3.2> A desperate search for meaning.)] Humans might have developed their creativity with their innate need to search for meaning to add value to things in life.

Routines benefit from the added value of meaning, so they become more enjoyable. “There are people who enjoy their proficiency in rinsing a mug without wasting water, starting the CD player with an elegant press of the right button (...) Someone else ...pointed out that he is an author who can turn the mundane act of putting on a sock into an almost religious experience...”¹³² The

¹²⁹ Schumaker, John. *In Search of Happiness: Understanding an Endangered State of Mind*. Westport, Conn: Praeger Publishers, 2007. Print. P. 87

¹³⁰ Singer, Irving. *Modes of Creativity*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2011. Print. P. 58

¹³¹ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 30

¹³² Ehn, Billy and Lofgren, Orvar. *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print P. 94

human capacity to adjust to diverse and difficult conditions, transforms routine in a pretext for creativity to happen. I affirm that the minimal reconfigurations of quotidian habits are unmistakable creative acts. They comprise the art of daily life, since they make life feel a bit more special. Incidentally, the anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake, author of the book *Homo Aestheticus* has come with a new perspective on art that defines it as the biologically endowed need or desire to make things special. This definition explains, somehow, our relationship to creativity and our constant engagement with creative processes.

Any routine has the potential to be special, or to be performed in a special manner. It is no less than fascinating to witness how mundane acts become exceptional treats of creativity. Here's an example of a routine executed creatively. I found it by coincidence on an Internet blog about relationships: "I love how my fiancée makes the simple act of putting on perfume so theatrical. She sprays the lightest amount in the air, walks through it with this real straight-faced look and wafts the perfume cloud around her..."¹³³ I particularly like the perfume example because it is a little implementation, or an outcome if you will, of an imaginary world. The theatrical gesture depicts the need to transform the monotony of routine into something meaningful.

By the way, it is crucial to consider how the use of information and telecommunication technologies, like Internet, is changing the way humans train their creative skills, and develop their creativity. "Ordinary" people around the world are "investigating", dissecting and re-conceptualizing routine and monotony through social media like *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Flickr*, etc. There are millions of videos of people having fun while seriously folding their cloths, making their beds, brushing their teeth, putting on make-up, washing the dishes, and so on. They are making contests (e.g. *Bed making Contest*, *Shirt buttoning Competition*, *Folding blankets Challenge*), inviting other users to copy them (*Doing the dishes*, *Alicia washing on a washboard*, *Folding a T-shirt in 2 seconds*), sharing their routines and techniques (e.g. *My birthday make-up tutorial*, *Tips on a bedtime routine*, *My everyday hair routine*), imitating, mocking or improving other's techniques (e.g. *How to tie a tie -Benosaurusrex version-*, *My own version to tie my invisible shoes*, *My version of the self-tying shoelaces*). Humans are communicating through media. They are creating and modifying existent text, music, video, images, and games. In conclusion, humans might be developing the language of vernacular daily creativity or simply said: the language of ordinary life.

¹³³ "Unexpected Things Men Love About Women." *Glo*. Web. 07 May 2012.
<<http://glo.msn.com/relationships/unexpected-things-men-love-about-women-7315.gallery?photoid=54831>>.

6.3) AN EXPERT SPEED-DAYDREAMER'S CASE ¹³⁴

"Imagine how it feels to race at 300km/hr. It's like being away from everything... it's to dominate, possess, and to be above everything."

My mother is an expert daydreamer and *Formula 1* enthusiast captivated by speed, motor machines, and racing drivers from an early age. I present her case as an example of a skilled daydreamer who developed and put in practice her daydreaming techniques to cope with boredom, and to compensate her urge for an exciting life. This section introduces the reader to the *daydreaming props*¹³⁵ and sounds inspired by *Formula 1*'s world and machines she employed to play, and travel to her inner world. Wilma took her mental journeys and games in such a "professional" and consistent fashion that they have traced part of her life, and the way she perceives life. Her wishes to feel speed in her body and reach the sky, for instance, came true. She used daydreaming as a natural tool to relate meaningfully with her inner worlds and self. This relation revealed where meaning was for her. In a like manner, she paid attention to her dreams and understood they reflected the real wishes of her *self*. Wilma's case also portrays the humans' search or need to experience speed. She sensed speed as having the faculty or potential to suspend her from reality, and remove her temporarily from the mundane. Framed in this context, this section aims to trace the story of her fascination for the world of car racing and her identification with *Formula 1* drivers. I developed the materials for this paper based in conversations I had with her via Skype. This section is also an introduction to the next chapter about *Formula 1*, the sport.

Wilma car racing "story of curiosity" (as she calls it) began when she was around seven years old. It was the mid-1950s, and there was a garage for car repairs next to her house. It belonged to her neighbor. He was a mechanic and a racing driver. Wilma used to watch him for hours while he fixed the cars: "He would go under his car on top of a corrugated iron sheet or under the hood, holding tools in his hands. He was there all day. He would twist, tap, inspect, and handle car parts. My neighbor would always wear overalls covered with grease... I used to wonder about the leaks and the parts he would remove from under the car. It was intriguing... it was like a 'secret science' to me. I wanted to take his place so badly and do what he did. He seemed to do such a pleasant activity."

¹³⁴ This section's theoretical method is based in Prof. Sherry Turkle's "Technology and Self: Things and Thinking" course methodology. The course description presented in the syllabus says: "Explores the role of objects in thinking, human emotional development, maintenance of social control. Meant to be an introduction to "thing" or object studies. Integration of theoretical materials from anthropology, psychology, social theory, and history with concrete narratives about objects from an interdisciplinary collection of scholars." In fact, a big part of this section has been written as an assignment for her class. Understandably, I chose the subject and the approach. Fall 2011, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

¹³⁵ Term used by researchers Billy Ehn and Orvar Lofgren in *The Secret World of Doing Nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. Print.

These first impressions on cars and racing had a strong impact on my mother's imaginary. She did not see them only as mere images, but she transformed them into materials for her play repertoire. So, Wilma constructed her fantasy world based in the audiovisual immaterial resources she got from observing her neighbor plus a few objects. As a result, her games took place in her mind, more than in the tangible world. Because "daydreams are divorced from physical action,"¹³⁶ I will call my mother's intangible means as *racing props*. For instance, she describes one of her "dreamy" games in this way: "So, I would go under my tricycle wearing a pair of pants to be just like him. Wearing pants was part of the ritual...I did not touch my tricycle or a single nut. I would just lie on the ground and fantasize about fixing a car. I used to dream about being a car mechanic."

One of my mother's games features was the use of car and engine sounds that came directly from her neighbor's garage. "When I was a car mechanic I used to make engine sounds... the fixing/repairing sounds of cars. Car sounds are very important. They also give you the feeling of movement and speed. (...) When you make noises you think you are there, inside the car." Indeed, car mechanics and drivers develop an embodied connection with the machines through their sounds. It is a kinesthetic relationship. Thanks to these sounds, they understand the machines and feel the speed in their bodies, which is different than just having visual input.

In a like manner, the machine sounds my mother heard during those early years introduced her to the basics of car mechanics. As a matter of fact, the immaterial nature of these sounds allowed her to participate –although passively– in her neighbor's tasks. She did not need to touch the cars or look at their inner parts. She could hear the engines from her patio and understand what the mechanic was doing and more importantly, how the cars were doing: "He would start the car engine and I would listen to the sounds coming from it. They said a lot about the functioning of a car. The weird wrong sounds indicated when the engine was not working properly. So, my neighbor would work on a machine until it produced a loud and fluid sound. Then, the car would roar loudly, indicating it was fixed."

Wilma's fascination with cars, engines, and the sounds of speed has accompanied her throughout her life. Gaston Bachelard asserts that "memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening."¹³⁷ In fact, the daydreaming techniques my mother used for her racing fantasies improved as her audio-imagery got richer with the years. She would adapt her techniques to new situations and circumstances, or she would acquire new sound props from the media resources she had at hand. Assuredly, the memories of those early sounds and the images of the car mechanic-racer had a strong impact that shaped her life. I will come back with an example later on.

¹³⁶ Barth, F. Diane. *Daydreaming: Unlock the Creative Power of Your Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. P. 9

¹³⁷ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1994. Print. P. 5

One day, the garage closed indefinitely. My mother never saw her neighbor again. Soon, she heard that he had had an accident in a race and died. She had never attended any of his races. However, Wilma's identification with her neighbor paved the path of her captivation with the world of car racing. From those days, she devoured any news about the sport in the magazines my grandmother brought home. Little by little, her interest grew as she read about the *French 24 Hours of Le Mans*, the Brazilian *Interlagos*, and other racing competitions and circuits around the world. People followed the races through magazines, newspapers, radio, and later on television. But even before TV arrived, Wilma recalls hearing and reading about racing drivers as much as movie stars: "I knew the names of the drivers, the motor-racing teams and where the competitions took place each month. I loved how the racing drivers' names sounded... more than the movie stars' names. (...) Movie stars did not intrigue me as much as Formula 1 pilots. (...) For me, acting was not as dramatic or unique as racing. It did not involve risking their lives. Formula 1 drivers were way more interesting. Many of them would announce their retirement but would continue racing anyway. (...) Some would have terrible accidents, but a few months later they would continue racing. Racing drivers conquer their fears."

Like many other followers, Wilma developed a sense of identification with the drivers by combining her imagination with the information she had available. "I imagined myself racing in the competitions. It was all mental for me as I did not have images of the drivers or the races. I used to dream about racing. I wanted to have that kind of life: racing from one city to another; and stopping to fix the machines. Fixing the machines was vital in my racing trips." Decades later when she finally watched Formula 1 single-seaters racing on TV, it was love at first sight. The machines' technological qualities astonished her, manifesting her "wildest" fantasies, to escape from conventional daily life. The machines revealed her non-conformist inner world. "The machines were impressive. They were the most powerful cars in the world. They were aerodynamic. Not at all like my neighbor's cars. Imagine driving those machines! Imagine ordering them to go at any speed you want! Imagine how it feels to race at 300km/hr. It's like being away from everything... it is to dominate, possess, and to be above everything. Feeling 'that' speed must be like touching the sky! I did not want to touch the sky, you know? I wanted to be in the sky. That is what I wanted. I wanted to get out from the earth, from daily life, from the mundane."

When asked about her personal connection with speed and what it means to her, my mother replied: "My connection with speed is probably related to my dreams. I used to dream a lot about flying. My dreams were about finding ways to propel myself; to suspend myself in the air. (...) Speed is the highest sensation of all. It's incomparable. It's like reaching something that is unachievable. This is what cars can do. Speed makes you see things pass. I wanted things to happen fast. I think this is because we used to travel by train a lot. It was so slow. So, I wanted to feel like a racer, to feel the speed with my senses; I wanted to feel that kind of pleasure in my body. I used to think racing drivers were very happy."

Gaston Bachelard uses the spiral staircase of a house as metaphor of a gimlet for the dreamer to get out of the depths of the earth and begin his adventures in the heights.¹³⁸ Similarly, the racing machine acts as a metaphor of a rocket to outer space for my mother. Her speed machine takes her away from the surface of the mundane and prosaic, trespassing the layers and conventions of routine and daily life. The rocket transports her to an unlimited space. There, she floats free, released from the burdens of reality igniting her most daring dreams and fantasies. Once in outer space, our dreamer gets a different sight of life. From her spacecraft's window things look beautiful, exciting and spectacular. Now, she is travelling in the inner fields of her mind. She has landed in a place where she feels happy and complete.

The daydreaming expert Diane Barth affirms that although it is not possible to act on a daydream in the moment, it may direct to future action – depending on the fantasies' intensity and consistency.¹³⁹ This “future action” could even mean decades later, like in my mother's case, whose fantasies and identification with machines and speed shaped her involvement with aviation and planes. As a matter of fact, during the 1980s she taught technical English for pilots and air traffic controllers. While she worked as an instructor she learned to fly light aircrafts and aero motors. Part of the training included learning aircraft mechanics, meteorology and aerodynamics. Her dreams came true. She touched the sky at fast speed with machines. Like racing drivers, her life was also quite unconventional: she was the only female instructor in the institute, and one of the only women working in aeronautics at that time.

Understandably, she wanted to transfer to me her enthrallment for speed and her admiration for racing drivers. For this she used her “play techniques” and immaterial props: “When you were nine months old I lived in your father's parents' house. Life there was boring. So, I used to run pushing your red stroller; repeating the names of my favorite *Formula 1* drivers: Juan Manuel Fangio, Niki Lauda, Emerson Fittipaldi, Gilles Villeneuve... and so on. I repeated their names over and over as I narrated your race. You were passing the other drivers in this or that curve. Things like that. The idea was that their names would get printed in your memory; that you would love racing. I wanted you to be a racing driver. I wanted you to have a spectacular life, with strong emotions... Racing drivers were definitely out of this world... Their lives were exciting. I wanted the same for you.”

Clearly, even if Formula 1 was –and still is– a male dominated sport, my mother did not regard it as a men's sport. She was critical about sexism. When I was a kid, she would talk about the fact that F1 teams hired only male pilots, and that women were used as “decoration” in the races. Sadly, things have not changed very much. Currently, only male drivers race in the championships. Women

¹³⁸ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1994. Print. P. 24

¹³⁹ Barth, F. Diane. *Daydreaming: Unlock the Creative Power of Your Mind*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. Print. P. 9

(grid girls) are hired to hold umbrellas for the drivers in the starting line. In F1's official history only five female drivers have competed in the races so far. But, the future seems promising. During this year, two female drivers have been invited to race with important teams. Unfortunately, they will not compete in the official races; they will perform as test drivers only.

In the end, my mother's aims to imprint Formula 1's spirit and her love for speed are emerging in my thinking. Formula 1 has definitely taken me by storm although I wrongly thought the subject was brand new in my life. Simply put, I'm fascinated. Only by interviewing my mom and writing this text did I realize that racing was sleeping inside me. Even though I will never race in *F1*, I might at least become a good virtual driver or a racing video game designer. In the last chapter, *Many Findings and an Outcome*, I present information about the design of my first video game prototype: a metaphorical racing computer game.

7› FINDING MEANING: LEARNING SKILLS

THE REAL AND THE VIRTUAL FORMULA 1 RACING AS MEDIUMS OF SELF-EXPLORATION THAT BRING ABOUT SELF-KNOWLEDGE

As introduced in the Method of Understanding, I am interested in understanding why people play racing video games. In this chapter, I will try to answer the following questions: What do people think about Formula 1 racing, F1 video games and speed? What do they mean in people's lives? What kind of experiences does speed –real or virtual– generate? What do F1 video games and simulations offer to the players? What makes them different from other video games? Where do F1 games intersect the real sport?

7.1› BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO FORMULA 1, THE SPORT

Formula 1 or *F1* is the highest class of auto racing according to the *FIA* (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile). The "formula" in the name refers to a set of rules to which all participants and cars must comply.¹⁴⁰ *Formula 1* is associated with the extreme and spectacular. It is also exciting, engaging, and sometimes frustrating in addition to being dangerous, stressful, and sometimes fatal. Formula 1 is the sport of controlling and understanding acceleration, time, and distance with a machine. Since F1's nature is about reaching perfection, it is physically, emotionally and mentally exhausting, and requires extensive preparation. Drivers need to have nerves of steel, kinesthetic and visual abilities, and great reflexes. Furthermore, racers must be absolutely fit in order to control the machines that reach speeds of 300 km/h or more, and to avoid life-or-death mistakes under tough physical conditions. The very best racing drivers have certain psychological and physiological traits that differentiate them from other athletes. They are highly competitive, especially independent, intense, and usually reserved persons.

Nonetheless, Formula 1 is not only about drivers and races, but also about teams and machines. This fascinating form of racing pushes the binomial man-machine to the limits. Specialized crews of engineers develop the F1 single-seaters' cutting-edge technology, and dozens of technicians build them and update the models on a regular basis. Undoubtedly, these sport cars, that since the late 70s

¹⁴⁰ "Formula One." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formula_One>.

are more aircrafts than cars,¹⁴¹ are the most expensive vehicles in the world, not to mention that they might be the sexiest due to their aerodynamic characteristics and high performance qualities.

For these reasons, this hazardous sport is one of the most mentally demanding but glamorous of all. Some people believe Formula 1 is just a reckless snobbish activity and that the racers are superficial mavericks driven by adrenaline. However, since driving at significant speeds requires making quick but rigorous decisions, the drivers' job demands high levels of concentration and focus which help them to develop abstract thinking and analytical skills. In addition, these athletes' permanent confrontation with the possibility of death takes them to existential levels. Racing is essentially an introspective, audiovisual-mental experience that stimulates self-exploration and self-reflection, and brings about self-knowledge. Formula 1 reveals our fantasies, or dreams about inaccessible, dangerous, or unusual achievements or lifestyles. Speed –as an abstraction, idea, or experience– acts as a vehicle that transports real or virtual drivers to their inner worlds where they spend time with themselves. In these intimate spaces, suspended from reality and the mundane, they examine their lives or “go” to places in their minds they have not explored before. The mental states rendered by these experiences set the conditions for meaning to happen. (or what I mean by meaning.)

In general, people find *meaning* in racing because they “click” with speed, cars, or danger in one way or another. While some might have a fascination or innate need for speed, or for strong emotions or sensations, others might be particularly wired to engage in risky behavior. Some might acquire interest in the sport, or develop an admiration for the drivers, and for the technology of the machines, through the education they received at home. Certainly, for others, car racing is an audiovisual aesthetic experience. The roaring sounds of the machines or their technological beauty call some people to race at high speeds. For others, racing is a metaphor for life and a goal on its own. Last, in some candid cases, racing is a dose of dopamine.

7.2> FORMULA 1, THE VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

Thanks to communication and computation technologies, millions of people enjoy the exclusive *Formula 1* sport even if only few top specialized drivers can practice it. To celebrate this spectacular sport and racing in general, to make it more accessible to common mortals and to train real drivers, thousands of video games and simulations of all kinds have been designed and produced since the 1980s. These interactive technologies share most of the real racing features except that they are not dangerous at all, not physically

¹⁴¹ Dave00075f1. "The Secret Life of Formula One - Part 1." *YouTube*. YouTube, 14 Feb. 2009. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oahaNKEGfvc>>.

demanding, and do not require previous mental preparation. Virtual driving provides a type of excitement that is fueled by the search for perfection. Dominating the controls and the game mechanics is not as easy as it seems. Mastering a game or a simulation requires endurance and extensive practice, but once the skill is acquired, racing is enthralling. These digital interactive games offer a space for the player where he deals with challenges and difficulties introspectively. He gets transported to intimate dimensions where he explores and evaluates his flaws and achievements. Sometimes, speed becomes a meditative experience or quality leisure time, offering the player an instance for self-reflection, or simply solitude.

7.2.A.3 A VIRTUAL DRIVER'S CASE¹⁴²

In this section, I present the results of an interview to a professional virtual driver, who uses racing as an introspective tool to get to know himself. I argue that this personal, intimate practice is a form of travel. It is an excursion to get his dose of meaning. The interviewee does not state his virtual practice as such. However, his pursuit to perfect his driving skills, confront him to the knowledge of his own nature. Every virtual session becomes a confrontation with his strengths and weaknesses. Racing unveils the F1 racer's personality and character: his real self. Then he reflects. For this reason, he does not share his experience with anyone. His search for self-knowledge is a form of finding meaning... within himself. The virtual driver states that he does not play F1 games for the thrill of speed. I assert controlling speed drives him, and when he does conquer it he gets suspended. He is beyond the mundane. To add body to this text, additional information and facts about real F1 racing are contrasted and compared with virtual racing.

Rob Veloz¹⁴³, a freelance writer and F1 fan developed his interest and passion for Formula 1 mainly through playing video games and simulations. He began his virtual racing "career" in 1988 when was nine years old. He was introduced to racing by his father, who is a big fan himself. "My father always made sure there was fun racing stuff in the house so I could play with it. He also used to tell me stories about 60s and 70s F1 drivers."

¹⁴² This section's theoretical method is based in Prof. Sherry Turkle's "*Technology and Self: Things and Thinking*" course methodology. The course description presented in the syllabus says: "Explores the role of objects in thinking, human emotional development, maintenance of social control. Meant to be an introduction to "thing" or object studies. Integration of theoretical materials from anthropology, psychology, social theory, and history with concrete narratives about objects from an interdisciplinary collection of scholars." In fact, a big part of this section has been written as an assignment for her class. Understandably, I chose the subject and the approach. Fall 2011, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

¹⁴³ To protect the identity of the interviewee I have changed his real last name.

Rob's first racing video game was *Pole Position*. His only task was to drive a car and beat the time. Compared to today's video games and simulations, this game was not "that" interesting. Visually, its cartoonish aesthetics and game mechanics were quite limited due to the kind of graphics available in 1988. The F1 game Rob Veloz remembers as truly fun was *F1 Pole Position*¹⁴⁴ for *Super Nintendo*, released in 1993. He said: "I liked it because it was more about racing than other games. Games were arbitrary, this was a fair game. It appealed to me to have a faster and better car. The other games were about making it difficult for the player to play." In *F1 Pole Position*, the player begins with no technology for the car. As he levels-up he gets better engines, gears, steering, tires, or even suspension¹⁴⁵. The vehicles could be customized to adapt to the different race tracks.¹⁴⁶ The better the player would perform, the better machine he would get. Rob's goal was not winning the game per-se, but developing a better car in order to race better.

When Rob Veloz discovered that *F1 Pole Position* featured the official sixteen race courses of the 1992 Formula 1 season,¹⁴⁷ he got interested in the sport itself. As an anecdote, he recalls a racer difficult to surpass. It was the McLaren driver with the yellow helmet. Since F1 was not particularly popular in the U.S. and Rob was very young, he had no idea that the driver depicted in the game was Ayrton Senna. When he realized this, he was immediately interested and began to research the legendary figure and his life. In Rob's case *F1 Pole Position* functioned as a bridge to engage him in the real sport. Later, the virtual racer moved on to other kinds of racing games although F1 games continued to be his favorite. However, he clarified that speed is not what enthralled him but F1's perfectionist nature: "I love games with mechanics for constant improvement. I want to be more efficient in the track. I don't like smashing other cars. I like games that are closer to the real races." Curiously, Rob does not consider himself a perfectionist, but he "generally tries to do things right."

SimBin –a Swedish video game developer company– has a couple of games Rob especially appreciates: *GTR 2* and *Race 0.7*. *GTR 2* is a racing simulator with detailed photo-realistic depiction of powerful cars and beautiful circuits. It was designed with the latest graphics technology, and provided a newer, enhanced driving model. Its realism was redefined with absolutely authentic physics,

¹⁴⁴ The name of original Japanese version released in November 1992 was *Human Grand Prix*.

¹⁴⁵ "The suspension of a modern Formula 1 car forms the critical interface between the different elements that work together to produce its performance. Suspension is what harnesses the power of the engine, the downforce created by the wings and aerodynamic pack and the grip of the tyres, and allows them all to be combined effectively and translated into a fast on-track package." "Suspension." *Formula 1*. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.formula1.com/inside_f1/understanding_the_sport/5285.html>.

¹⁴⁶ "F1 Pole Position (video Game)." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 05 Apr. 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F1_Pole_Position_\(video_game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F1_Pole_Position_(video_game))>.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

dynamic day and weather changes, as well as an impressive damage model.¹⁴⁸ Rob explained: “These are very serious racing games about setting faster times. It’s not about passing other cars, but doing better laps... better and better.” He also asserted that his interest to achieve perfection is fueled by the nature of the game mechanics: “I like these games because they’re about getting feedback. It’s rewarding to get a 10th of a second faster. In other games, you don’t know for sure if you’re getting better. When it feels you are going very fast, you are probably going very slowly. The reason is that when you are racing very cleanly, you don’t feel that the car is doing something crazy. In these games, you feel you are in a racing car.” When asked to explain more about the experience of virtual racing, Rob replied: “When it feels fast, I get in flow. Flow¹⁴⁹ comes in a testing session, when I feel comfortable with the car. Flow is like meditation. I’m a writer and it’s difficult to forget everything. Racing is like half an hour of thinking nothing. Afterwards, I don’t remember it. I’m so absorbed in the task.” Then, I asked Rob when flow happens. His response was: “It happens when I have mastered the track, so I know where the breaking points are. When the car is good, and all the things I have to assess are done, I go in flow. I become so absorbed. It is muscle memory.”

Expectedly, our virtual driver has never quit playing. These days, the games he values as good are *F1 2010* and *F1 2011*. Both come with all the official drivers, teams and circuits featured in the 2010 and 2011 FIA Formula One World Championship. To have a complete idea of what these games are, let us read the F1 2011’s game designers’ (*Codemasters*) description presented on its official website: “Competitive online racing is extended with 16 players going head-to-head with up to 8 AI drivers added to simulate the full grid of 24 drivers. A new *Parc Ferme*¹⁵⁰ area, an expanded and revamped *Paddock*, new *Pit Lane*, celebration and reaction cinematics and an enhanced media interaction system fully immerse players in the glamour, pressure and excitement of being an F1 driver. Players progress from rookie to FIA F1 Drivers’ World Champion in an extensive career mode where gamers fight to become priority driver and shape the development of the car by performing well in races and earning performance upgrades. This season’s new *Pirelli* tyres are faithfully simulated in the game, and if players push their car too hard they may experience a range of authentic new damage failures. New atmospheric effects, including dynamic clouds, compliment a weather system which features an advanced rain model that affects on-track grip.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ “Games» GTR 2 - FIA GT Racing Game” *RaceRoom Online*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.raceroom.net/games/gtr2-fia-gt-racing-game/>>.

¹⁴⁹ Concept coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Finding Flow: The Psychology Of Engagement With Everyday Life*. NY: HarperCollins, 1997.

¹⁵⁰ “Term used to describe a secure area at a Grand Prix circuit wherein the cars are driven back to the pits post-race.”

“Parc Fermé.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 25 Mar. 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parc_ferm%C3%A9>.

¹⁵¹ “Formula 1 Game - The Official Game Site.” *Formula 1 Game*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.formula1-game.com/uk/>>.

Rob Veloz is a serious gamer. On average, he plays these games every month, and when he plays them, he does it very intensely for a week at a time. During the real racing season that usually lasts from March to November he plays “quite a bit”. What makes F1 2011 appealing to our racer is that it goes through an entire driver’s career mode. For instance, in the beginning the player belongs to the worst team and has an inferior car. Little by little, he becomes better at the tracks, and finally gets to race. Rob described the game accordingly: “It’s difficult. Just doing one race requires several playing sessions. It’s fun, it’s like a real career. It feels like going to work. There are practice sessions, and car set ups. I usually keep a notebook with my car set ups and times in order to verify that I am really improving.” It is touching on a human level and outstanding on the professional one that Rob meticulously records his data and improvements. Some real F1 drivers do something similar: they make notes or keep blogs of their training sessions and races, describing the tracks and their curves, the behavior of the machines and the functioning of their computers, and their own achievements or mistakes. This technical writing exercise is so urgent and significant that some drivers write books about their racing art.

Indeed, real racing pilots dissect their performance and the machine’s after each race or training session with the aim to continue improving. They are driven by a continual need to surpass their own past performance and the performance of the others, and to grapple with any problems that the racing environment might present.¹⁵² Working towards improvement induces considerable stress and psychological pressure before and during the races. The preparation ahead of the race is emotionally exhausting; it requires dedication and mental programming on a full-time basis. Racers need to reduce tension, calm their nerves, and even keep away from the press.¹⁵³ During the race, drivers must clear their minds to achieve sheer focus to allow their instinctive reactions to surface. Of course, trusting their immediate judgment in order to react fast is a delicate matter for they need to be in absolute equilibrium. Ayrton Senna once explained the pressure: “From Thursday to Sunday you establish this target to achieve, and you have so many steps to go through, so many barriers to go through.¹⁵⁴ They all drain you, they are problems. The moment you pass the chequered flag, boom!¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Henderson, Michael J. *The Psychophysiology of the Racing Driver*. UK: Bulletin of the British Association of Sport and Medicine, 1968. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. Web 07 May 2012 <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1435576/>>.

¹⁵³ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." *Sportscars*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

¹⁵⁴ Usually, the races take place on Sunday. The qualifying sessions happen from Thursday to Saturday.

¹⁵⁵ The chequered flag indicates that the session has ended. “During the race it is shown first to the winner and then to every car that crosses the line behind him.” "Flag." *Formula 1*. Formula 1 Official Site. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.formula1.com/inside_f1/understanding_the_sport/5282.html>.

Your mind goes down. You are just holding your mind; holding it, holding it to the chequered flag (...) everything is pre-established to produce the optimum up to the chequered flag. When you get there that's the end."¹⁵⁶

Only with a limpid mind and perfectly trained body F1 drivers can use their mental and physical abilities to control the machines at their maximum capacity. Thanks to video games' nature, the preliminary phase is unnecessary for the virtual racers. In games, the thrill and focus, the exhaustion and frustration, and the search for equilibrium happen all in the race itself. In Rob's words: "A lot of times I'm trying to answer questions, to figure out, to understand if I'm doing something wrong or if I have had enough. If I'm losing



¹⁵⁶ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." *Sportscars*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

control, I say to myself: ‘don’t screw up’, ‘don’t get angry’, and ‘don’t panic’, ‘focus’... It’s so easy to ruin a race and crash.” Similarly, Senna described his mind frame as follows: “There are spots where it’s going a little bit down and you have to say to yourself: ‘keep cool, give a moment, think positively, just go for it.’ (...) When you are on your own in a corner, you tend to have a feeling that it’s just a bit too much, then you have to bring in from somewhere.” These constant battles –that real and virtual drivers must win in their minds to continue improving– can be very overwhelming. This reveals that the racing drivers’ drive to race is not just a juvenile need for adrenaline. The urge lies in their depths; in their profound need to go further, and to challenge or prove themselves. When Rob wins a battle, his takeaway is quite intimate: “Usually, something is left tangling if I don’t find the right car set up. If I do, I feel great and self-congratulatory. It is a very individual, very private experience that I don’t share with anyone.”

As described earlier, racing triggers a continuous inner or intimate dialogue that runs in both the real and virtual driver’s mind. In the case of the actual F1 driver, the car’s cockpit functions as a chat room where important decisions are made. This ultimately fast decision-making task requires the use of particular mental abilities. Drivers must be able to “select precisely the right option in a given situation, whether it is a question of taking a corner absolutely on the limit, or trying to retrieve a car which is about to go badly out of control.”¹⁵⁷ The study *The Psychophysiology of the Racing Driver*, asserts that top F1 athletes have “a great capacity for thinking in abstract terms.”¹⁵⁸ In addition to abstract thinking, they must have some specific personality traits. The same study affirms that “the successful driver is an independent man who relies on himself rather on other people, whom he tends to dominate. Contrary to popular opinion, he tends to be reserved.”

The case of F1 virtual players is different. No special traits are necessary to succeed in F1 games. These technologies help players recognize their identification with and match their personality with the real racers. When I asked Rob what F1 drivers he identified with, his answer was: “Sad to say, I would be a Lewis Hamilton. Lewis is very talented, very aggressive. He can do many things with the car. The problem is that when he gets angry he does very stupid things. Sometimes he has brilliant performances, and sometimes it is a disaster. I would be him.” Rob also admires Jenson Button –who won the World Championship in 2009– because “he struggled in F1 for a number of years until he got it.” Sherry Turkle asserts that “video games encourage identification with characters –from science fiction, sports, or war stories– but leave little room for playing their roles.”¹⁵⁹ Taking into account Rob’s experience, I argue that in racing

¹⁵⁷ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." *Sportscars*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

¹⁵⁸ Henderson, Michael J. *The Psychophysiology of the Racing Driver*. UK: Bulletin of the British Association of Sport and Medicine, 1968. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. Web 07 may 2012 <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1435576/>>.

¹⁵⁹ Turkle, Sherry. *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. Print. P. 81

games the player plays himself. In the virtual tracks, the player is confronted with his own possibilities and real limitations, regardless of which top F1 racer he chooses to play as. Rob knows that not even in the virtual world a Rob could race like an Ayrton. The driver, in either form of racing, is in intimate dialogue with his very self.

F1 2011 revealed Rob's identification with the aggressive and persistent drivers. Furthermore, this game allowed him to have a deeper understanding of the sport and the challenges F1 pilots confront. In relation to this, Rob said: "I think a lot about the real sessions and the drivers when I play the games. These games have helped me understand racing. They have changed my relationship and understanding of F1." Specifically, Rob affirms that thanks to these games he pictures how crazy Senna must have been and what racing possibly meant for him: "I still can't understand how Senna did the things he did. At Donington (1993) for example, his transmission failed, the track was very wet, and his car had four or five gears. It was impossible to race with those conditions, but still he did it and won that race." Senna's first lap that day at Donington is considered (until today) the best lap in the history of F1.

For Rob, watching the championship on TV is an experience on its own, as he has raced virtually in the same circuits. He knows the tracks perfectly. He has a sense of how each curve feels for the real F1 top drivers. One of the tracks he loves most is the Belgium Spa-Francorchamps racing circuit. It has a length of 7 km., with a race distance of 308 km. in 44 laps. "What is great about Spa is (...) that it's a track in the middle of the wilderness. It's not made for spectators. Thrilling moments occur at a particular turn: Eau Rouge. You are probably going at 320 Km p/hr... It feels terrifying. It's scary and hard to describe. It always feels amazing. Once you are up the hill, it goes down to the forest. It's an incredibly fast turn. (...) The track is so long that it could rain on one side and not on the other. It's a wonderful track, it feels fast and dangerous." In fact, the spot of Eau Rouge is equally challenging and dangerous for the real drivers. It is the kind of spot that confronts them with two possibilities, which are explained in Senna's words: "the risk implication of getting it wrong and having a big shunt, and the risk implication of doing it right and how much you're going to gain."

Rob Veloz emphasized that the F1 games he plays simulate what racing is nowadays. Unquestionably, he enjoys the games. Yet, a scent of nostalgia traced his words: "I would like to play a game set in Ayrton's era, or in the type of racing my dad saw. But the tracks are destroyed or modified beyond belief and the cars are gone. At Monza, for instance, there was very fast track, now it's gone. You would go sailing off the banking into the trees..." Nonetheless, Rob mentioned the exception of a game that simulates the 1967 season, and explained that *historical virtual racing* –as he calls it– is the only way people could experience the F1 racing of those days. *Grand Prix Legends* (nicknamed GPL) is a computer racing simulator published in 1998 and developed by the shuttered Papyrus Design Group. It is a nearly perfect re-creation of the 1967 Formula 1 season, and is considered by many as one of the most realistic racing games ever

released.¹⁶⁰ Just as an example of the game's outstanding resemblance to the real Grand Prix, every single car has its own distinct characteristics.

In conclusion, regardless of how realistic F1 games are or will end up being, they are just a sip of reality for the players. It is difficult to imagine a game that emulates and recreates the most dangerous features of speed racing. A game that would eventually risk the players' physical integrity would no longer be a game. Nonetheless, for players like Rob, F1 games function as a tool to understand F1 reality. The virtual driver clearly said: "I will never be an F1 driver, but at least I know how crazy and brave race drivers had to be." At present, Rob Veloz is getting ready –and cannot actually wait– to go outside the virtual world and leave the comfort of his video game single-seater to drive a real go-kart in Boston's F1 racing circuit.

7.3› THE MASTER OF MEANING: AYRTON SENNA, THE POET OF SPEED ¹⁶¹

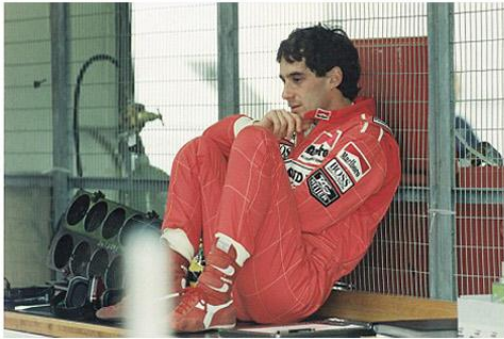
According to a considerable number of surveys, the best drivers in *Formula 1* history are Juan Manuel Fangio (1911-1995) and Ayrton Senna (1960-1994). In this chapter, I expose the case of the latter driver as one of the findings of my romantic search for meaning, introduced in the *Chronicle of the Method of Understanding*.

I have entitled Ayrton Senna the *Master of Meaning* because I believe his passion for racing, and drive to achieve perfection and to conquer all limits was a form to find himself (meaning) mentally and existentially. The legendary figure's exceptional search for perfection was so fierce, pure, emotional, and authentic that can be described as existential.¹⁶² Only when he pushed himself to the

¹⁶⁰ "Grand Prix Legends." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Prix_Legends>.

¹⁶¹ This section's theoretical method is based in Prof. Sherry Turkle's "*Technology and Self: Things and Thinking*" course methodology. The course description presented in the syllabus says: "Explores the role of objects in thinking, human emotional development, maintenance of social control. Meant to be an introduction to "thing" or object studies. Integration of theoretical materials from anthropology, psychology, social theory, and history with concrete narratives about objects from an interdisciplinary collection of scholars." In fact, a big part of this section has been written as an assignment for her class. Understandably, I chose the subject and the approach. Fall 2011, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

¹⁶² "Existentialism is generally considered to be the philosophical and cultural movement which holds that the starting point of philosophical thinking must be the individual and the experiences of the individual, that moral thinking and scientific thinking together do not suffice to understand human existence, and, therefore, that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to understand human existence. (Authenticity, in the context of existentialism, is the degree to which one is true to one's own personality, spirit, or character)."



extreme, to the boundaries of the finite, he felt happy, fulfilled, and calm. Also, when driving towards perfection, he was capable of reaching certain mental states where he found what I believe is meaning. Ayrton was constantly searching and finding, and searching and finding, and always, always learning. Note that he did not regard racing as a search for meaning *per se*, nor he talked about the subject as such. However, in many occasions, he mentioned the urge, need or wish he had to be happy, as he used to talk about the mental states where he found “more and more”. For these reasons, Senna plays a capital role in helping me convey what I mean by meaning and where to find it. It would be ungraceful, to say the least, to even try to define this intricate concept. Fortunately, others have tried. “...Peter Wessel Zapffe attempted to articulate a concept of meaning: *‘That an action or some other fragment of life has meaning means that it gives us a quite specific feeling that is not easy to translate into thought. It would have to be something like the action having a good enough intention, so that when the intention is fulfilled, the action is ‘justified’. Settled, confirmed –and the subject*

"Existentialism." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 7 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Existentialism>>.

calms down’.”¹⁶³ When the racer’s intentions were fulfilled and actions justified Senna was in peace. In some occasions, when he reached his limits, he became one with himself, with life, with racing, with the universe, and even with God. He would achieve complete mental stillness: absolute meaning? In general, racing made him happy, and winning gave him glory.

Ayrton Senna also represents the finest example –the contemporary paradigm– of the sensitive and exceptional human being I was looking for. He embodied all the qualities (and many others I have not thought about) my ideal XXIst century poet should have, although he died before the turn of the century. He was passionate, sensitive, generous, and shy. The ferocious driver had a transcendent introspective personality, strong character, “dazzling intellect and coruscating charisma.”¹⁶⁴ He was beautiful, and simply the best as Tina Turner would sing for him. Senna is the *Poet of Speed* because of the extra-natural things he was capable of doing at 300 Km/h. in the material and real Formula 1 tracks as well as in the intangible mental circuits of his mind. Ayrton, used speed as a vehicle to travel to unexplored mental territories; to lands few human beings are able of reaching.

Throughout these pages, the reader will see that the master driver envisioned racing as a metaphor for life and as a form of self-exploration that fostered self-knowledge. Ayrton Senna, who also regarded *Formula 1* as a medium of expression, is the driver of drivers who passionately searched for perfection, and lucidly explored the limits of racing by pushing his own boundaries. He carefully studied the cars he drove, and developed an intimate relationship with these dangerous machines. The Brazilian knew how to control the cars and make them perform to their maximum capabilities.

The steps to write this chapter consisted in compiling a small bibliography, collecting written documentation found on the Internet (essays, blogs, articles, texts, and press releases) and watching audiovisual material (YouTube videos, documentaries, and sound recordings). Accordingly, the forthcoming text is the result of the revision and analysis of these materials. It explains, demonstrates, and illustrates the points mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Take this chapter as a journey through Ayrton Senna’s passion, thinking, racing philosophy and experience, connection with the race vehicles, and search for meaning. The following pages aim to celebrate him as an extraordinary human being, brilliant racing driver and sophisticated dromomaniac.

¹⁶³ Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 29

¹⁶⁴ "Ayrton Senna" *Formula 1*. Formula 1 Official Site. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.formula1.com/teams_and_drivers/hall_of_fame/45/>.

7.3.A) SENNA: RACING IS IN MY BLOOD

“Racing, competing, it's in my blood. It's part of me, it's part of my life; I have been doing it all my life and it stands out above everything else.”¹⁶⁵

Ayrton Senna da Silva was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1960. According to his sister Vivianne, in his early childhood “Ayrton always had a toy car in his hands and kept playing with it, or he was seated behind the steering wheel of a car. He imitated the noise of an automobile: roaring to mean that the car was starting up, or shrieking to mean that it was breaking.”¹⁶⁶ When he was only four years old, his parents gave him a miniature *go-kart*¹⁶⁷ with a small motor. He was infatuated with it, showing the first sign of his future, deep love for racing.

As he grew older, he tinkered with old engines and car parts in his father’s garage. By the age of ten, Senna’s father built his first full sized go-kart, the *007*, which became his favorite toy and most important instrument for the rest of his life.¹⁶⁸ Not only did Ayrton drive it rigorously after school, but he also cleaned, polished, and painted it **every** day. He would take the vehicle apart, check and fix its parts patiently, one-by-one. “He kept doing it until he had achieved perfection.”¹⁶⁹ Time had no meaning for the young driver. He would only rest once all the work was completed.¹⁷⁰ Aware of Ayrton’s talent and passion for racing, his father hired a technical trainer with whom he learned some basic racing skills. Lessons and training were not Ayrton’s only racing school. His weekends were highlighted by Formula 1 broadcasts that he avidly watched on TV.

When Senna was 13, he participated in his first official go-kart competition, and obtained his first victory. The future Formula 1 World Champion continued training, competing and winning in Brazil until he left the country. In 1978, he traveled to Europe to prove his skills in the professional go-kart and *open-wheel*¹⁷¹ competitions. He won his first (out of five) British *Formula 3*¹⁷² championship in

¹⁶⁵ “BrainyQuote.” Xplore. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/ayrton_senna.html>.

¹⁶⁶ Nstockert. “A Star Named Ayrton Senna Part 1.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6QQ_0TSTQs>.

¹⁶⁷ “Small four-wheeled vehicle. Go-karts come in all shapes and forms, from motorless models to high-powered racing machines.”

“Go-kart.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 30 Apr. 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Go-kart>>.

¹⁶⁸ “Memorial Ayrton Senna.” Web. 07 May 2012. <http://senna.globo.com/memorialayrtonsenna/home_port.shtm>.

¹⁶⁹ Nstockert. “A Star Named Ayrton Senna Part 1.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6QQ_0TSTQs>.

¹⁷⁰ “Memorial Ayrton Senna.” Web. 07 May 2012. <http://senna.globo.com/memorialayrtonsenna/home_port.shtm>.

¹⁷¹ “Open-wheel car, formula car, or often single-seater car in British English, describes cars with the wheels outside the car's main body and, in most cases, one seat. Open-wheel cars are usually built specifically for racing, frequently with a higher degree of technological sophistication than in other forms of motor sport.” “Open-wheel Car.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-wheel_car>.

1983. Very fast, his dazzling driving skills and his aggressive style attracted the attention of Formula 1 motor-racing teams. The Brazilian driver's abilities kept improving and growing proportionally with his dreams and ambitions to reach perfection, and ultimately to win.

Since his debut in Formula 1 with *Toleman* team in 1984, Senna won three World Championships, 41 Grand Prix, and earned 65 pole positions¹⁷³. During his years at Formula 1 he raced with *Lotus*, *McLaren-Honda* and *Williams* teams, until he died tragically in 1994.

On several occasions, the champion mentioned the importance of his early training in relation to his F1 achievements. His racing childhood went beyond the development of his driving faculties: it shaped his sense of belonging in life. In this respect Senna asserted: "I grew up with something inside of me, in my blood, in my heart, in my head... something connected with engines, noise, steering wheels, four wheels..." From the time Ayrton became a driver at four his vital space was the race track. He inhabited it with his mind, his body and the extension of it (his machine). He never abandoned it. In the track, he settled his roots, practice after practice, race after race, year after year. "Sheltered" in his car's cockpit, racing became the corner of the world where he found "home", and himself. "Pure driving, real racing, that makes me happy," he said.



¹⁷² "Formula Three has traditionally been regarded as the first major stepping stone for F1 hopefuls—it is typically the first point in a driver's career at which most drivers in the series are aiming at professional careers in racing rather than being amateurs and enthusiasts."

"Formula Three." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formula_Three>.

¹⁷³ "A driver has pole position when he or she starts a race at the front of the grid."

"Pole Position." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 05 Jan. 2012. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pole_position>.

At “home”, Senna literally raced in different languages. Let us recall that the Brazilian racer moved to England to pursue his dreams when he was 18 years old. There, he learned to speak English entirely self-taught. Denis Jenkinson, an F1 expert writer asserted that Ayrton admitted to think in English when he was considering ways in which to improve the performance of the car, knowing that he had to communicate in English with his engineers. But when simply pressing on during a qualifying race, or relishing a clear track, he thought in his native Portuguese.¹⁷⁴ Speaking of language, Shelley said that its nature is a “...direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being... for language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has relation to thoughts alone.”¹⁷⁵ This poetic description briefly explains why Senna’s most primitive racing emotions got manifested in the same language in which he learned to drive, and the most rational thinking occurred in English.

7.3.B.› SENNA: THE CAR IS AN EXTENSION OF YOURSELF

“He demanded absolute speed. For he wanted to be the fastest man in the world he demanded the fastest machines. He made drama with these machines.”¹⁷⁶

Ayrton Senna learned to control the steering wheel and the pedals of his car before he knew how to read or write. In short, he learned to think with his body. Through the years, this kinesthetic learning experience turned into a very intimate relationship with machines.¹⁷⁷ His body developed an extraordinary ability to “read” the behavior of the cars to a degree that the machines seemed embedded in his body: driver and car formed an integral being. In Senna’s words: “The car is an extension of you, is an extension of your body, because you are there, you are tight as part of it. And the more part of it you can be (...) the more sensitive you are to the actions and reactions of it, and therefore, you are going to exploit it. It’s the body work that gets the air flow through the ergonomics to work well. It’s the strength of the chassis that would save you from accidents. It’s the power of the engine that would power you full. It’s the ability of the brakes to stop you. It’s the suspension movements that are going to absorb the bumps and the vibrations of the engine, road, tires. The tires are going to roll you forward, smoothly and give you the grip to stop if you need to stop quickly. Go forward if you

¹⁷⁴ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." *Sportscars*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

¹⁷⁵ Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *A Defense of Poetry*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1891. Print. P. 5 Pdf version. Web. 10 May 2012. <<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/A-Defense-of-Poetry.pdf>>.

¹⁷⁶ "The Machines of Senna." *The Machines of Senna*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.nobiles.jp/f1/senna/machine/index.html>>.

¹⁷⁷ "Kinesthetic Learning | Facebook." *Facebook*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kinesthetic-Learning/115957218414637>>.

need to go forward quickly and turn quickly. I could describe some many things about it. So many details (...). The more you can be part of it, the more it can be one unit thing, for sure, the better you do.”¹⁷⁸

Undoubtedly, Senna’s understanding of the machines was as deep as his passion for learning. He is the ultimate example of the eternal learner with an integral approach. According to his own perception, he never really reached the peak of his learning curve. “It’s been a question of improving it, and learning more and more that there is almost no end as you go through. You just keep finding more and more. It’s very interesting. It’s fascinating.”¹⁷⁹ For our racing athlete, acquiring racing skills exceeded the development of the mental and physical abilities of driving. For Ayrton this included studying the machines rigorously, part-by-part, in their finest details. One of the Renault engineers working with the passionate Brazilian during 1985 and 1986 says: “Ayrton was keenly interested in the engine. Right from the start of his cooperation with us, he spent a lot of time with me and Bruno Mauduit learning how it worked and what parameters governed its operation –temperatures, combustion rates, and boost pressures– and also how these parameters interacted with one another. That’s a lot of data to absorb, but he grasped it all. He had a real insight into the realities, and he expressed himself easily with the engineers. He got so involved with this engine that it had become his own! For us, it was fascinating and extremely productive.”¹⁸⁰

Senna did not only have driving skills, but machine setting-up skills. He was in absolute communion with the F1 car, as his body and mind responded to the flows of information that came from its several parts, including its computer. "His brain could simulate all operations on the track such as the engine’s RPM, gear position, braking point, steering or so with the error by less than a hundredth second. He could adjust himself perfectly in line with his analysis so that



¹⁷⁸ Kiranowen. "Ayrton Senna - Racing Is In My Blood Pt 4." *YouTube*. YouTube, 27 July 2007. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KPqQ2uy6vE>>.

¹⁷⁹ Nstockert. "A Star Named Ayrton Senna Part 3." *YouTube*. YouTube, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6Vp27H_hIE>.

¹⁸⁰ Bernard Dudot in Nstockert. "A Star Named Ayrton Senna Part 3." *YouTube*. YouTube, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6Vp27H_hIE>.

he actually ran in 0.6 second faster if he said that he was able to run faster by 0.6 second. Besides, he could memorize all data for the process and condition of his machine. His memory was perfectly same as the telemetry data!"¹⁸¹ This physical-mental interaction with his single-seater contributed to the development of his sophisticated cognitive abilities. "One of the things that was most inspiring about him as a racing driver, was his ability to detach his mind from the physical requirements of driving the car. Those physical requirements are very high: the g-loads, the physical strength involved in turning the wheel, the braking and so forth and so on. But somehow, he managed to separate his mind from those actions with the result that his mind was fully functional, even on a pole position lap. And he could come back and he could recall it in the most minute detail and the engineers from Renault and subsequently Honda were absolutely gasped because what he told them was what the print out on the data logger would show."¹⁸² Granted, Senna's cognitive abilities contributed to set the conditions for his further explorations. He would not have known himself, nor travelled to unexplored places in his mind had he not been completely focused in tune with the machine, making complex mental operations.

As we have seen, Senna invested all his life and self in racing, and in studying the machines and their technologies. As a result, he dominated them in the tracks, even in the rain, like few drivers have. For a common mortal like me, it is difficult to imagine what physically entails to drive powerful machines under these demanding conditions (g-forces, high temperatures, strong noises). It is even harder to understand what it mentally entails to race in absolute concentration, under the pressure of knowing that a single mistake can cost your life. In this respect, the 1978 World Champion Mario Andretti shares this thought about concentration: "Winners are able to maintain their levels of concentration until the last meters of the race: 100% perfection, 101% is disaster, and 99 % is mediocre."¹⁸³ *F1* drivers think fast and make complex decisions in split seconds based on what their visual organs transmit to them. Being attached to the nervous system, eyesight is fundamental. The vision defines the driver's ability to measure, evaluate, and respond to the information generated in a race, such as the distance between cars, the curvature of the track, car parts that might fall from other cars, rain, smoke, flags, etc. Thanks to the mentioned features, racing drivers are able to develop abstract and analytical thinking.

The combination of the physical and mental operations, plus the possibility of death or the fear to suffer an accident stimulates self-reflection, and brings about self-knowledge. Speed acts as a vehicle that transports *F1* drivers to the depths of their inner worlds. In these intimate spaces, they examine their lives and think about life quite often and deeply. There, they confront and control their

¹⁸¹ Yoshitoshi Sakurai ex-Honda F1 Head. "Ayrton Senna Biography." *Ayrton Senna Memorial Museum*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.senna-web.com/eng/other/biography.html>>.

¹⁸² Nstockert. "A Star Named Ayrton Senna Part 3." *YouTube*. YouTube, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6Vp27H_hIE>.

¹⁸³ MindsetForSports. "Interview with Mario Andretti: Psychology of Racing." *YouTube*. YouTube, 01 Dec. 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfjFQ_g3W4s>.

deepest fears; for they know that everything can be gone in a single instant. There, they learn what they are really about, and what life means for them. For speed drivers, racing is not only a sport but an existential practice: it can be literally about life or death. This might be one of the reasons why these athletes live life at maximum performance. Each second counts. There is no life to lose.

7.3.C.) SENNA AND THE LIMITS OF RACING

“Motor racing is dangerous by definition. Motor racing is exciting. Motor racing is a sport that brings people to the limit: man and machine.”¹⁸⁴

Senna was not only a high achieving individual, but a racing thinker. He used his profound comprehension of racing as an instrument not only to attain victory, but to transcend his flaws and limitations to conquer perfection. Unquestionably, Ayrton’s passion, medium of expression, strength, weakness, and happiness was racing. Nevertheless, given his extraordinary deep intellect and sensitivity he did not regard racing only as a sport: for him, it was a metaphor for life, and an end in itself. He approached it introspectively as a practice that made him learn, grow, and know himself as a driver but also as a human. He pushed the machine to the extreme as much as he pushed himself. “His car was the vehicle of his innate will to win. He used this vehicle to rapidly overcome all the trials he encountered”¹⁸⁵ This man used racing as a form to drive in the tracks of his own being, and to explore his humanity. Once he said: "For me, this research is fascinating. Every time I push, I find something more, again and again. But there is a contradiction. The same moment that you become the fastest, you are enormously fragile, because in a split-second, it can be gone; all of it. These two extremes contribute to knowing yourself, deeper and deeper."¹⁸⁶

Indeed, Senna’s self-knowledge acquired through racing covered a spectrum of aspects: physical, cognitive, psychological, emotional, and even spiritual. The most dazzling lesson he had –in his quest to reach the limit of the limits– happened during the 1988 Monaco Grand Prix while driving at maximum speed (around 300 km/h or 186 miles/h). With his body in the cockpit of the high-performance McLaren-Honda MP4/4 (conditioned for speed, not consistency), his head protected by his yellow helmet and enveloped by the noise of his screaming single-seater, Ayrton travelled through the circuits of his mind. The racer described this particular “trip”: “It

¹⁸⁴ Ayrton Senna’s quote in Regis279. "Sao Paulo vs Palmeiras-dia Da Morte Do Senna." *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Oct. 2006. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LD40r1rpNA>.

¹⁸⁵ Commentator *Jornal Nacional*, Red O Globo Brazil, 1994.

¹⁸⁶ "Ayrton Senna" *Formula 1*. Formula 1 Official Site. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.formula1.com/teams_and_drivers/hall_of_fame/45/>.

was like I was in a tunnel. Not only the tunnel under the hotel, but the whole circuit was a tunnel. I was just going and going, more and more and more and more. I was way over the limit but still able to find even more.”¹⁸⁷ He said: “That day I suddenly realized that I was no longer driving conscious. I was in a different dimension...and I realized I was way beyond my conscious understanding”¹⁸⁸ He added, “Then suddenly something just kicked me. I kind of woke up and realized that I was in a different atmosphere than you normally are. My immediate reaction was to back off, slow down.”¹⁸⁹

McLaren’s team principal at that time, Ron Dennis –who was on the other side of the track behind the control screens–remembers: “Ayrton was multiple seconds into the lead. Had the race in hand, with a handful of laps to go. He received a regular message that said: “You are so far in the lead, slow down! ...It was absolutely incredible!”¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Senna was 55 sec. ahead and 1.4 sec. faster than Alain Prost (known as the “Monaco specialist” having won that competition three times before 1988) who was driving behind him.

What Senna did that afternoon on his light single-seater went beyond the ordinary, and over the border of what we usually perceive as conscious reality. He abstracted the experience of speed. He reached absolute perfection. He touched the farthest point his thinking abilities allowed him to: “...in that situation I was able to experience something that I never did before, to a level never reached before, with a final result that was my maximum. Out of that day, I could not have told myself, 'I could have done a little bit more here or there.' I have not really reached that feeling again.”¹⁹¹ Sherry Turkle asserts that “in sports, mental and physical action have to come together. An athlete thinks with the body, (...) call it ‘muscle memory’, call it ‘flow’, call it ‘trusting your instincts’ –the experience of feeling in continuity between mind and body is part of the inner game of any well-played sport.”¹⁹² In effect, Senna drove in a state of flow that afternoon, but what is more surprising is that he surpassed it. He had driven in complete concentration and absorption before, but never beyond his conscious understanding. Apparently, he reached a state of mental *superfluidity* which is the supreme experience

¹⁸⁷ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." *Sportscars*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

¹⁸⁸ SENNAmovie. "SENNA - Exclusive Clip ('88 Monte Carlo Grand Prix)." *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 July 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeFqsWWG1qE>>.

¹⁸⁹ BrainyQuote. *Xplore*. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/ayrton_senna_2.html>.

¹⁹⁰ SENNAmovie. "SENNA - Exclusive Clip ('88 Monte Carlo Grand Prix)." *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 July 2011. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeFqsWWG1qE>>.

¹⁹¹ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." *Sportscars*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

¹⁹² Turkle, Sherry. *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2005. Print. P. 84

of flow. “*Superfluidity* is a state of performing with zero friction, zero viscosity, and superconductivity — it is a state of absolute harmony and endless energy. Superfluid performance in sports (...) is when someone did something that seemed almost humanly impossible.”¹⁹³

On a similar occasion the same year, Senna claimed to have had a vision of God as he went through the last curve of the *Suzuka* circuit during the Japan Grand Prix. Ayrton’s words said it all: “Somehow I got closer to God and this was very important to me. I visualized and saw God who is a part of me.” I mention this particular incident to show the high levels of concentration and performance this athlete was capable of attaining. Personally, I do not have any doubt that Senna had such a vision. The driver was a believer. Whatever he saw could easily be called “God.” An atheist would have called it differently. Regardless of any belief, what is crucial here is that Senna’s maximum performance took him to dimensions he had not explored before, and possibly to dimensions no other driver has experienced either. Ayrton travelled through his mental territories to the point he found the closest to absolute expression or abstraction of perfection. Was this the real meaning? Probably, feeling how he felt, seeing what he saw, is to “experience God.” (This does not prove God’s existence though.) Yet, the question pending would be: Is “God” equivalent to supreme meaning?

Once Senna had a real understanding of how far he could go with his mind power, he learned he had no need to visit the subconscious realm again. He said: “I could not really cope with that in a manner that I could find easy (...) I know some of the reasons that I went to that limit, because I wanted so much to do more and more, and better and better, which pushed me further and further.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, anytime Ayrton approached the subconscious state, he slowed down. Note that, as obvious as it might sound, his brain was fused with the functioning of the car. Both machines were in communion with speed. It was not a matter of changing his “mental mood” with a decision to back off, or to “come back to reality.” Senna needed to “repress” the pedals of his car to decelerate his own state. Ayrton’s method was to administer his instincts according to the demands of each experience, which was a form of self-exploration. In effect, he “was acutely aware of his own mortality and used fear to control the extent of the boundaries he felt compelled to explore”.¹⁹⁵ In this respect, the introspective driver converted racing into a medium to acquire self-knowledge: “I continuously go further and further learning about my own limitations, my body limitations, psychological limitations. It’s a way of life for me.”

¹⁹³ "The Athlete's Way." *Superfluidity: Peak Performance Beyond a State of 'Flow'*. Web. 07 May 2012.

<<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201110/superfluidity-peak-performance-beyond-state-flow>>.

¹⁹⁴ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." Sportscars. Web. 07 May 2012.

<<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

¹⁹⁵ SENNAmovie. "SENNA - Exclusive Clip ('88 Monte Carlo Grand Prix)." *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 July 2011. Web. 07 May 2012.

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeFqsWWG1qE>>.

On a similar level, Senna was not only racing, but transforming it into “art.” He used driving in the same way artists use art to learn about themselves and to say something about the world. He also aimed to push racing –as a sport –to its limits, in a like manner artists aim to push the mediums they work with to extend the confines of art. For Senna, the end of competing went far beyond the finish line. Racing for victory –according to the nature of competing– was just the condition he needed to explore further, and push the mentioned limits. In every single competition Ayrton used to give himself away completely: body, mind, and “soul.” He had the passion of a true poet. Shelley’s words exemplify my assertion: “A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not.”¹⁹⁶ Senna’s expressed this participation in the one: “You commit yourself to such a level where there is no compromise. You give everything you have, everything, absolutely everything.”¹⁹⁷ His commitment was such that whenever Senna would win, his emotions and feelings were intense enough to arrive at a state of glory. He reflected on these exalted moments: “You will never know the feeling of a driver when winning a race. The helmet hides feelings that cannot be understood.”¹⁹⁸ Considering Senna’s intellect, it is difficult to think that his intensity about winning was a trivial expression of rivalry. Triumph, for the passionate driver, meant mastering the tracks, conquering the curves, dominating the machines, and much, much more: “Physically I was at the end (...) but because I had won I recovered quickly. Winning is the best medicine to regain strength. In the evening, (...) I drove the race again in my mind. I wanted to enjoy my victory once more that way.”¹⁹⁹ I argue that in this point, Senna was going on a fantastic blissful journey in his mind. The mental “replay” of his winning race was pure mental poetry. Apropos, Shelley would have added: “Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.”²⁰⁰

Clearly, Senna’s passion for racing exploited his deep sensitivity. The dangerous activity brought his human complexities and inner self to the surface. Racing unveiled and shaped a man who became not only a fierce master driver, but a skilled artist, and to the surprise of many, a profound poet. Ayrton Senna da Silva, the poet of speed, understood the emotional dimension of racing with the same depth and clarity with which he comprehended machines’ engines. He had an unusual approach to the vast, emotional dimensions that racing entails, one that others in F1 had not. Senna would, in fact, reflect and talk about emotions, feelings and sensations very

¹⁹⁶ Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *A Defense of Poetry*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1891. Print. P. 4
Pdf version. Web. 10 May 2012. <<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/A-Defense-of-Poetry.pdf>>.

¹⁹⁷ "Talk:Ayrton Senna." - *Wikiquote*. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Ayrton_Senna>.

¹⁹⁸ BrainyQuote. *Xplore*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/ayrtonsenn347361.html>>.

¹⁹⁹ Hilton, Christopher. *Ayrton Senna: The Hard Edge of Genius*. London: Corgi Books, 1991. Print. P. 25

²⁰⁰ Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *A Defense of Poetry*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1891. Print. P. 40
Pdf version. Web. 10 May 2012. <<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/A-Defense-of-Poetry.pdf>>.

naturally: "So you come back into your world, and you are not going to let anything on the exterior touch your feelings."²⁰¹ He lived fully and very intensely every single day: "I would never want to live partially, suffering from illness or injury. If I ever happen to have an accident that eventually costs my life, I hope it happens in one instant."²⁰² And so it happened. The 1st of May, 1994 something went terribly wrong with Senna's cockpit. He was doing the 7th lap during the Italian Grand Prix at the Tamburello corner of the infamous Imola circuit. Senna became a passenger to continue his journey elsewhere. He lost his life tragically doing what he was born to do.



²⁰¹ Jenkinson, Denis. *The Mind of a Driver: Interview to Ayrton Senna*. "Psychology of Racing." Sportscars. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.sportscars.tv/Newfiles/tick.html>>.

²⁰² "Ayrton Senna" *Formula 1*. Formula 1 Official Site. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://www.formula1.com/teams_and_drivers/hall_of_fame/45/>.

8) MANY FINDINGS AND AN OUTCOME

“Why should I stay safe?”

David Hammons

This research has set a new beginning for my art practice. For this reason, I willfully decide not to name this section “conclusions” but *Many Findings and an Outcome*.

First of all, I have learned to cope with my *romantic*²⁰³ affliction, and to find my meaning, or the meaningfulness or joyfulness of my art, or for art. Now, I know that I can find it by understanding, searching, recognizing and studying the primitive and basic things I like to do. If these rudimentary things give me a purpose to make art, make me feel at ease and connected to myself, then I have found meaning. Fundamentally, I have learned that my art meaning is in action, and in immediate satisfaction. Not in production, or elaboration of art objects, or projects. Projects are for the future, my art should happen in the present tense. My meaning is in sticking to my non-conformist nature, even if my art bothers or offends some minds. In an occasion, Ayrton Senna said: “people want to change you, but this is my personality, this is who I am.” I should materialize my ideas when they make me reach a mental state where I get immediate satisfaction, and or true joy. If I feel stressed about the materialization of an idea I should quit it. It is a sign that it is not really meaningful for me. Art should not make me unhappy. Art should not feel like labor. Art should not feel like the imposition of a set of rules. Only when I follow my instincts, feelings, emotions, conflicts, and my most basic and banal questions I can find my meaning. This is why I am going and going. However, I still need a couple of years more, to find the form of the art that fits more with life than with the art institution. This ideal art would be so embedded in life, that exhibiting would be ridiculous. Final question: Am I cured from romantic boredom? I do not know. But, if I ever get to have a meaning withdrawal in art again, I know how and where to find it.

Second, I present a brief straight forward sequential recap of the findings of the *Method of Understanding*, to refresh the reader.

²⁰³ “Romantic boredom is characterized by not knowing what one is searching for, other than an unspecified, boundless fullness of life. It is rooted in the search for the infinite... The romantic does not know what he is looking for, except that it is to represent some sort of infinite meaning. Without such a ‘grand meaning’ there is no meaning at all.” Svendsen, Lars. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2005. Print. P. 60

Video games directed me to play. The study of play took me to fun. Fun revealed boredom, in opposition. And there, I stopped in awe for a while. The concepts of boredom as meaning withdrawal, and romantic boredom as the infinite search for meaning, both defined by the philosopher Lars Svendsen resonated like nothing else since 2004. Seriously. I took a sip of relief and sighed. Boredom was the core of my artistic conflict. Things were cristal clear now: the solution was in the concept. From the glorious day, I discovered had to find my meaning, I tried to only do things that would give me satisfaction. This included, researching and studying topics I have not explored before, even if they were “trivial”, or light. “The irrelevant” was my thing. Later, I named this need to disrupt the order of the serious, appropriate, correct and relevant as the Anarchy of the Unimportant. I took a deep breath and continued. So, I began to study routine, repetition, monotony. Then I discovered that these variations of daily life are naturally redeemed by creativity. This phenomenon is called daydreaming. And daydreaming is wandering, which is the mind going elsewhere, possibly escaping from reality. The urge to travel or wander is called dromomania. In sleep, humans travel and wander. Dreaming is a form of play. Then again, through play I found car racing games. Racing directed me to Formula 1, the sport. The sport introduced me to the best racing driver. Ayrton Senna taught me about the relationship between speed, skills and technology in Formula 1. Finally, the fast sport dragged to Formula 1 video games and simulations.



The body of these concepts and subjects has defined the fundamental transition, and the general conceptual, theoretical, artistic, scientific, philosophical and technological framework for my future practice and theory. Thanks to this search for meaning I found that I am interested in: poetry, philosophy of art, media theory, video game and game design theory, philosophy of learning and education, creative cognition, philosophy of mind, theory of play, philosophy of boredom, political economy & ecological critique, existentialism, romanticism, and psychophysiology of sports.

The following features will define the reconfiguration of my practice: form of production, time production, artist’s identity, the function of the artist in society, artistic statement, subject matter, overall formal structure, and the application of my practice in other fields. This is how I envision my future art practice.

FORM OF PRODUCTION: Ideally, it lies between play, leisure and work. Play should happen in the time destined to work. Work should feel like a leisure activity. I need to “develop”, inform, and enrich my leisure skills, or maybe learn some sport skills. I have already observed that the mix of these forms of action render “fun” processes. Blending work, leisure and play aims at questioning the notion of productivity established by the high demands of productivity established by the contemporary networked, telecommunicated society.

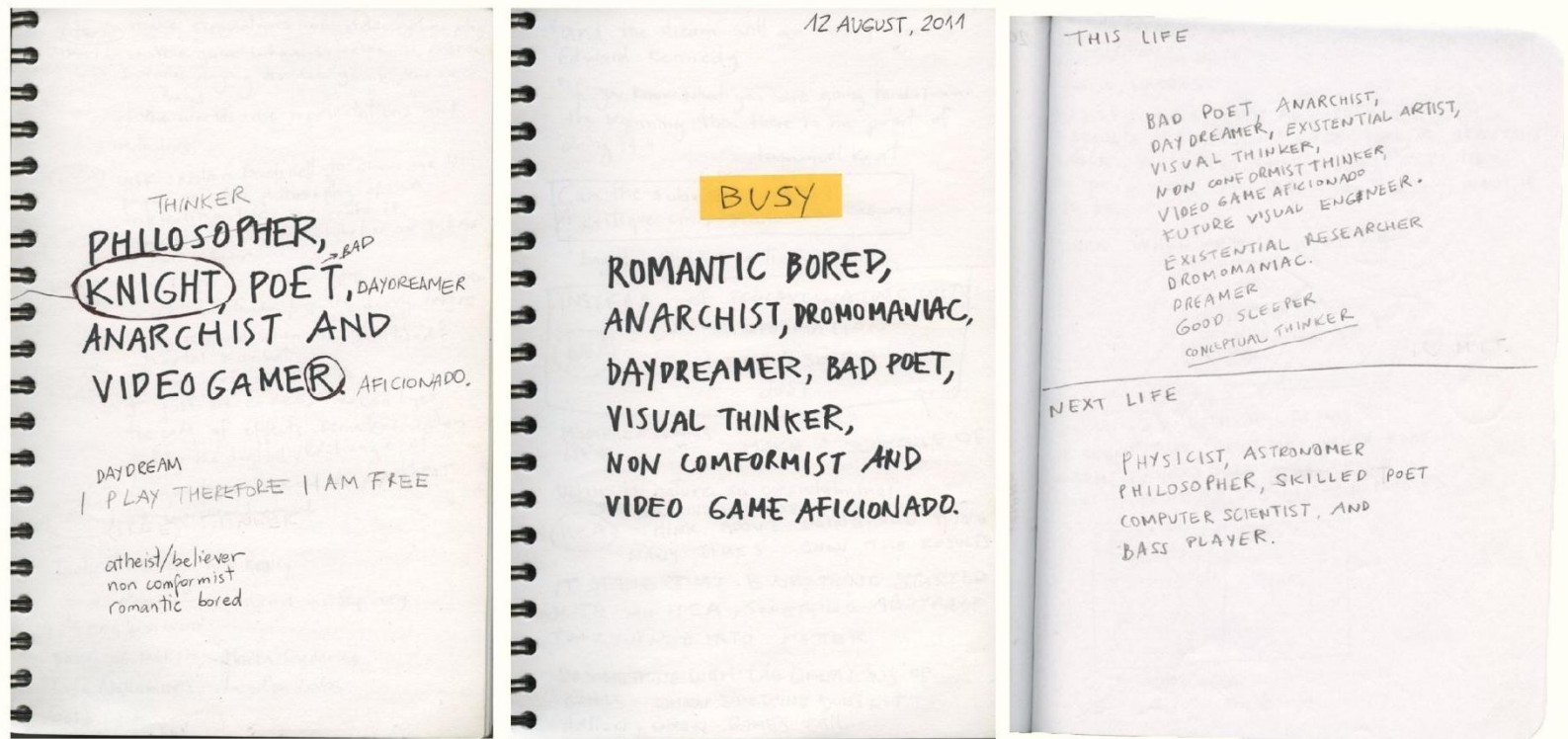
TIME PRODUCTION: My ideal time production is short, fast, casual, and immediate. I appreciate the “immediate-satisfaction” job of hair dressers, in the same way simple-fast-casual engage players for short periods of time, in comparison to long narratives. If I implement this model of time production, I will have more time to live, and my life will resemble more to a poet’s life. I will “live slower” according to my ideal notion of time. The idea is to produce less but more effectively, to increase my life’s quality.

ARTIST IDENTITY: In these two years, my identity has shifted significantly little by little (see next page). Every shift came with the discovery of a subject, a question, a concept or an issue revealed in the “trajectory of understanding.” Today, I can say that I am a: bad poet, video game existentialist, speed dromomaniac, eclectic researcher, non-conformist artist, racing daydreamer, conceptual dreamer, and romantic anarchist. In the future I would like to be: a *Scientific Researcher of the Irrelevant*, and a Visual engineer, if I get to learn programming (see next page).

ARTIST’S FUNCTION IN SOCIETY: Thanks to this investigation, I have realized that my initial quest for a paradigmatic XXIst century poet was “too” romantic. My ideal sensitive human being would not have fit with the mentality and demands of this globalized century. My dark sweet poet would have been out of place. Shelley’s words describe my initial naïve ideal: “A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why.”²⁰⁴ I still believe a poet is a nightingale singing in the dark. It is pure poetry, but it is too sad. But, after getting to know Ayrton Senna, my paradigm has shifted. Contemporary society needs examples, not tortured individuals weeping poetry. This century needs the light of sensitive, passionate, brave, humble, strong, skilled poets that can take millions to glory. For these reasons, the passionate driver is the poet of speed. On a personal dimension, Ayrton Senna has become my personal trainer, *Formula 1* instructor, guide, and self-exploration coach. From the first time I watched his interviews, races, and the documentation of his life my admiration for him just kept growing.

²⁰⁴ Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *A Defense of Poetry*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1891. Print. Pdf version. Web. 10 May 2012. <<http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/A-Defense-of-Poetry.pdf>>.

ARTIST STATEMENT AND SUBJECT MATTER: The study of dreaming, daydreaming, routine, repetition and monotony revealed my wish to explore and scrutinize daily life, through the implementation of scientific-artistic experiments. I am interested in the smallest details of life: the act of removing the falling leaves from trees, the Antarctic stare of office workers in office hours, people folding their t-shirts with enthusiasm, people writing their secrets in public web sites, hairdressers making chewing gum bubbles, socks stuck in washing machines, and so on. I can use these tiny gestures as metaphors for works of art, but I prefer to see them as captivating subjects of scientific study. I would like to plunge in the worlds that contemporary-art takes for granted. I would like to become a *Scientific Researcher of the Irrelevant*. I want to believe in the little things that make humans more human, and more beautiful. These are some plans and ideas for my *Anarchy of the Unimportant*. By the way, my captivating encounter with boredom reminded me that I am interested in life, not in politics.



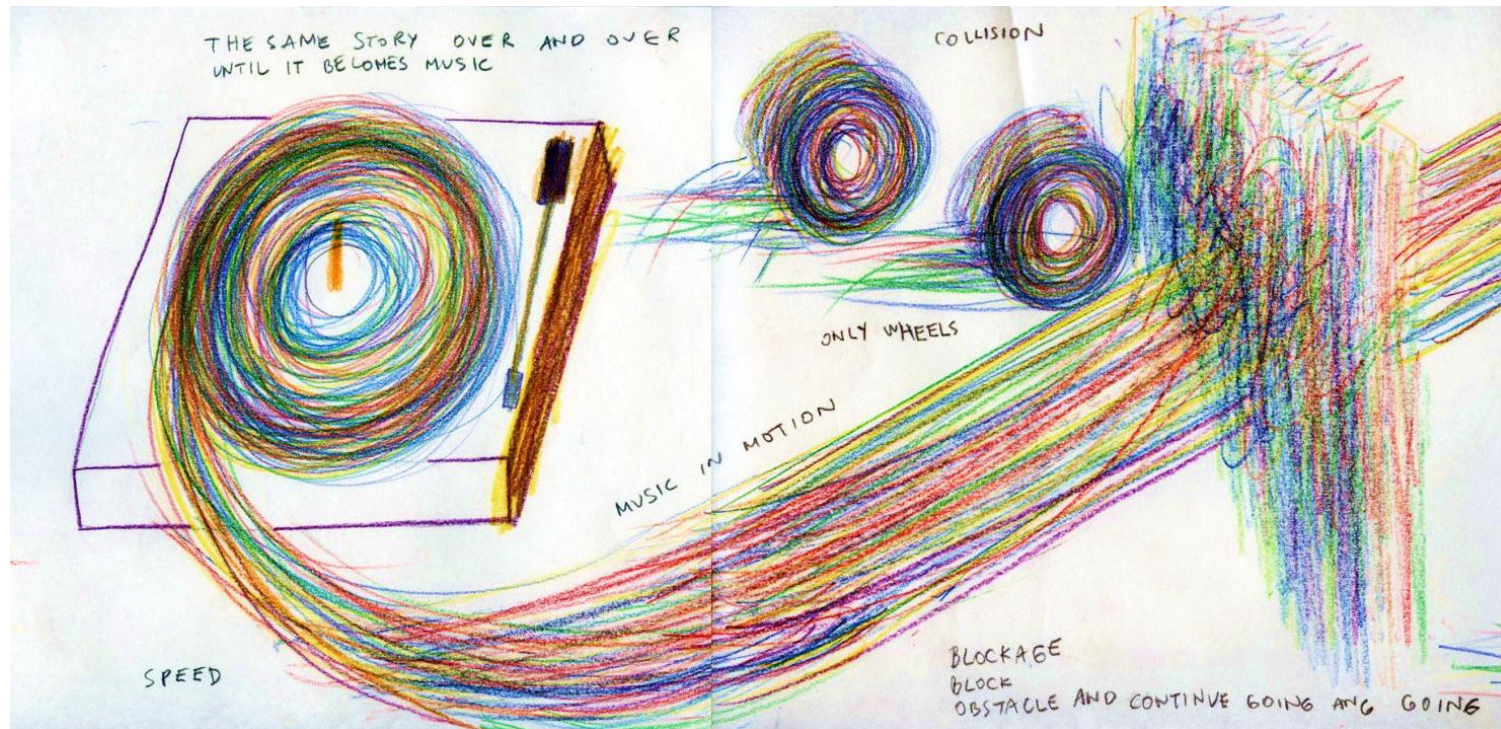
I have also realized that I my real especial talent consists in escaping from comfort zones. Feeling comfortable makes me feel uncomfortable. David Hammons once said: “I try to be one step ahead of my audience. Some artists are predictable. You’ve seen their patters over the last ten years... I look at these cats and this is what I never ever want to be or never ever want to do. Why should I stay safe?”²⁰⁵ Escaping, searching, and resisting conformism is in me, is part of my nature, and my singularity. I have to learn to exploit it, and use speed to move faster to continue going and going at my own slow pace.

Based in my experience in the ACT program as a learner, and artist, I have a conclusion regarding art education: I think art pedagogy could embrace methodologies that regard artist-students as learners, not as students of art. Art education cannot be reduced to critical reviews about the formalization of works of art. Art cannot be about making “effective” art products. Art is a tool to understand life, to find meaning. Thinking about art is a form of making it. Artists need to learn to think meaningfully about art, not to practice the making of successful, marketable, mainstream art-products. In my case, I am a learner. Learning makes me happy, not making art. Similarly, I believe in the potential and powerful influence games exert in people to enhance conceptual and existential thinking, and aesthetic appreciation. It would be culturally beneficial to exploit video games’ massive consumption to promote aesthetic literacy. These interactive technologies could be used as tools to pave the path for a wider and richer understanding of contemporary-art itself. As a contemporary artist, I also advocate for the recognition of video games’ artistic, cultural, symbolic, social, and technological possibilities as tools that help human beings cope and live in an increasing mediated, ultra communicated, computerized, wired, networked society.

APPLICATION: My experience as a research assistant for a social scientist is supplying me with the tools to, apply my knowledge in art (e.g. conceptual thinking, aesthetic literacy), and in video game theory & game design. I am also looking forward to be an “artist in the service of science”, especially for the fields of learning and education.

²⁰⁵ Jones, Kellie. *Eyeminded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print. P. 251

**8.1> THE OUTCOME: GOING AND GOING,
A METAPHORICAL RACING COMPUTER GAME**

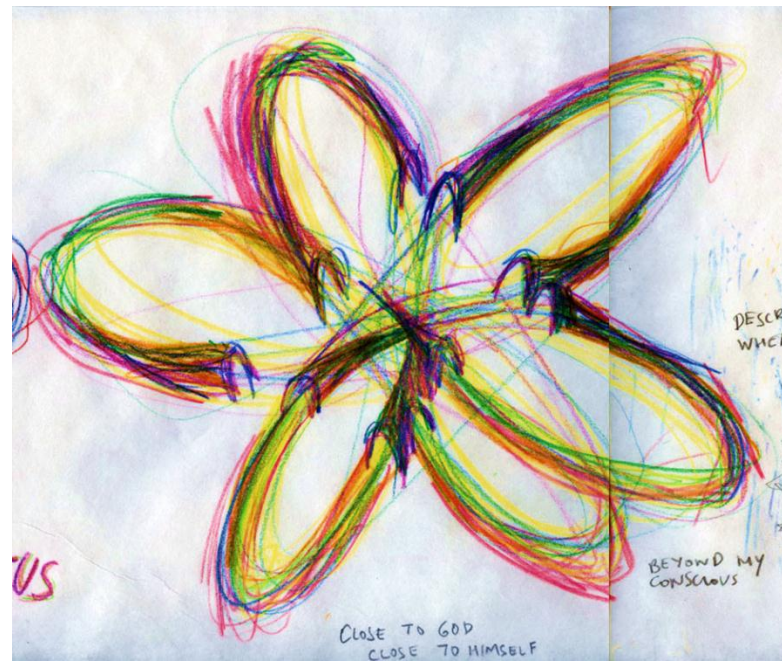
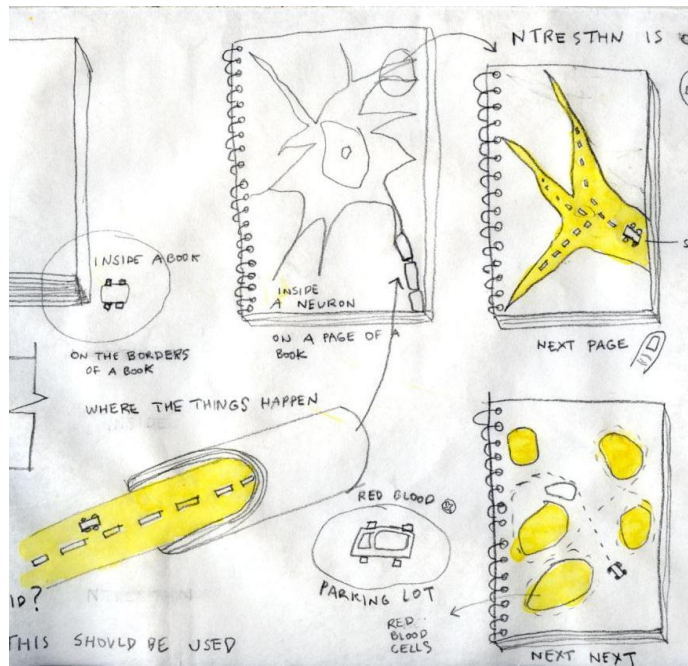


Going and Going is under construction. However, it is relevant to introduce it because it stands in the line that separates the before and after of my art practice. My future computer game is the outcome and the conclusion of two years of studies. It represents the shift, from a practice stuck in the “untouchable and traditional exhibition format”²⁰⁶ to the use of digital interactive technologies, and the generation of code through the implementation of computer languages. The most exciting aspect of this technological endeavor is to learn how to use and understand the logics of an entirely new language: programming, and new media: video games.

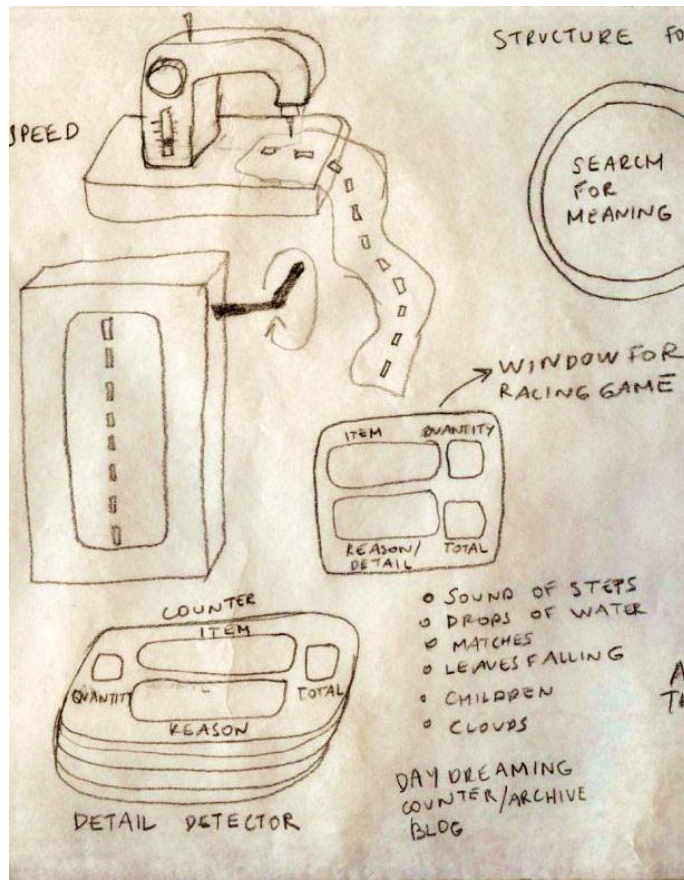
²⁰⁶ See page 28.

Going and Going comes as the result of a series of brainstorming sessions, in which the creative-thinking process took the form of a drawing/drafting process executed in long strips of paper. As a result, the design of the game became a race on its own. As the drawing overcame creative challenges and obstacles, it accelerated its pace reaching its maximum speed and final “shape” in the last meters of paper. The design process rendered the evolution of a constrained, naïve and concrete type of drawing that shifted into a dynamic, running and abstract one. Consequently, the visuals for the game graphics are rooted in the main feature that describes the nature of racing: going or running with speed. The aforementioned transformation of the drawing “style” represents a radical desired change in my artistic practice.

My video game focuses on racing as a metaphor of the search for meaning. It is about going from one thing to another... deeper and deeper, and until the player is “way over the limit but still able to find even more”, as Ayrton Senna would say. Unlike other games, *Going and Going* is not about controlling speed, competing against time or an opponent. This game confronts the player with the perception of speed as suspension (the condition of being suspended). It aims to provide an action and space for reflection and self-exploration, and the possibility for a dose of meaning.



The digital implementation poses a programming challenge: to set different rules with one single mechanic principle. The finished prototype will go through one or two testing sessions to measure its degree of engagement with the player. In this sense, I would like to make a racing game players would want to play again. Not as an addiction, but as a journey that offers something new the next time. I have a vision of millions of human minds going on mental excursions with my game. It is not about me, or my “art”, it is about them and our present time. It is about the generation of a game to suspended millions of individuals from routine, labor, repetition, monotony, productivity, reality and politics. I envision an anarchic, massive, quiet, beautiful action against the excess of meaningless productivity and information. It is a conceptual and symbolic attempt to slow time. The contradiction is that they will have to work. Some skills will be required. For instance, I will ask them to use the left hand if they are right handed, and viceversa.



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