

The power of restriction!

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While in bed with a flu, YouTube suggests watching a documentary in which the life of David Bowie is “understood” as “dealing” with the latent schizophrenia he inherited from his mother's side. Apart from the “quality” of this documentary, the main thought is in line with my column of two weeks ago: sometimes people return stronger from a battle, while also the opposite is sometimes true (a battle, restriction or limitation is disastrous, as was the case with Bowie's brother, who committed suicide in a psychiatric institution). This does not only concern people, but certainly also human products. Some products like the first PCs came on the market prematurely but they got better and better, after many adjustments. Other products entered the market almost perfect, which I surprisingly experienced with my first iPad in 2010.

All my life I have been fascinated by the fact that many great artists and scientists have experienced restrictions and limitations at firsthand. An extreme example is Stephen Hawking, who, after being diagnosed with ALS in early 1963, had yet to begin his truly impressive scientific career. Other people, such as Steve Jobs and Richard Branson, reached the top after it became clear at school that they were dyslexic. Again, sometimes restrictions lead to strength, and sometimes to exclusion.

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“information” with regard to spatial location and orientation. By teaching his echolocation techniques and applying them to other blind people, Daniel Kish even teaches the blind to cycle safely through the wilderness. Finally, biographies of many great artists and writers show serious setbacks in the early years, for example with psychiatric episodes, such as with Herman Hesse. Isaac Newton (1642-1726) was so limited in getting the everyday life organized that only after another eminent mathematician (Edmond Halley, 1656-1742) went to help him to organize his daily life, Newton succeeded in working out his grand ideas and put them on paper (the revolutionary Principia Mathematica). Isolation and restricted attention can sometimes lead to motivation and

inventiveness, while comfort and continuous access can lead to passivity and stagnation.

The tsunami example of two weeks ago - sometimes destruction leads to abandonment, while sometimes similar destruction leads to rapid reconstruction - is a good example of the statement “what doesn't kill me makes me stronger”. At the end of the famous Disney movie Mulan, when a young girl has defeated the Huns and rescued China, the great emperor says about Mulan: “the flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all”. But if you look carefully, we all need head wind to become strong. It is for good reason that Finland, Norway and Denmark form the top 3 of the 2017 World Happiness Report. Braving the cold together and coming through the inhospitable winter brings togetherness, organization and inventiveness. Although, with all my spluttering and sniffing, glued to bed during my spring flu, I also prefer good health without setbacks!