

Our newsletter

Making change happen

A newsletter for coaching and well-being practitioners

Detox and Grow!
by Chantal Vander Vorst



Open letter to Charles Darwin

Agility, liberated company and collective intelligence

The delicate question of power



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Dear Mr. Darwin,

I so wish you could witness what we are currently seeing across companies and I so wish I could understand what is going on in terms of the evolution of our species. **I have been coaching teams, individuals and organizations for over 15 years, and have never seen such high levels of stress and fatigue.**

And yet, human beings have developed many fabulous concepts such as agility, the liberated company, collective intelligence, sociocracy. These approaches add real value to teams and companies, but between you and me, they will work all the better:

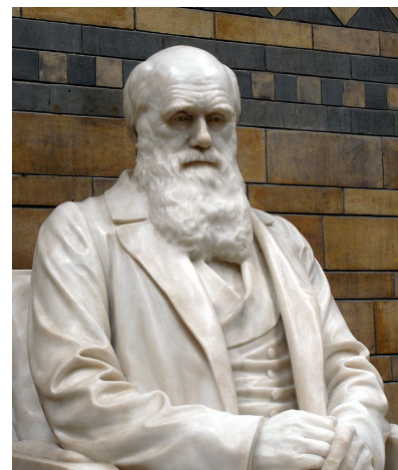
- When the issue of power is clear and transparent
- When the human will have put his ego away in his closet

And I'll give you my opinion: in terms of evolution of our species, *Sapiens*, we are not there yet.

Our colleague Harari states in his book "*Sapiens, a brief history of humanity*", that our species, *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* is in fact the only identified human species on earth. It seems that it has eradicated the other human species by a mechanism not yet fully elucidated.

We could perhaps find in this eradication one of the possible explanations for the supremacy that humans attribute to themselves, their power, as well as their progressive disconnection from their biology and the living systems that surround them?

Sapiens Sapiens regularly continues on this path in business, not hesitating to exercise his power, and regularly eradicate or symbol-



Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin, British naturalist and palaeontologist whose work on the evolution of living species revolutionized biology with his book: "*On the Origin of Species*" published in 1859.

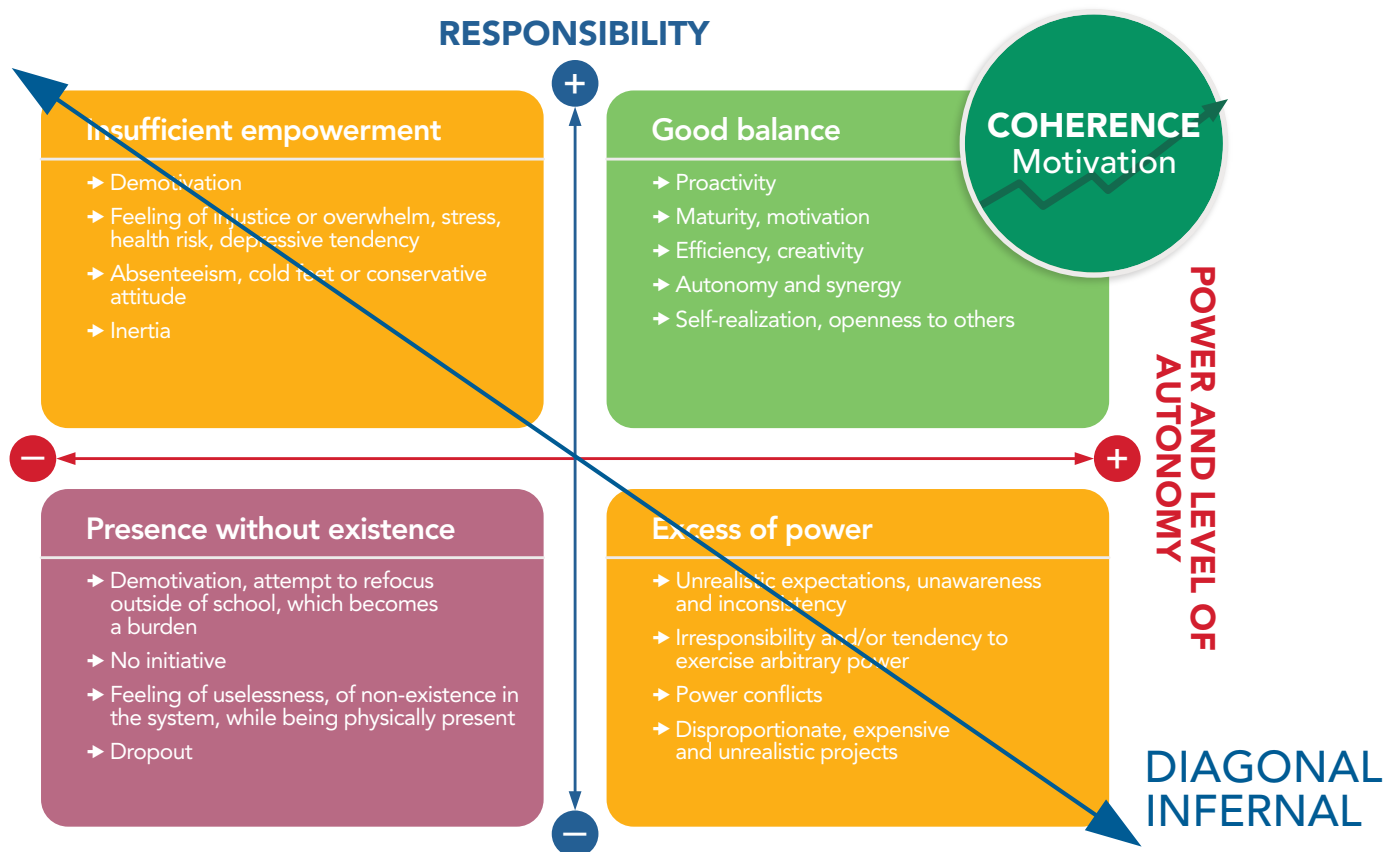
He was born on February 12, 1809 in Shrewsbury, Shropshire and died on April 19, 1882 in Downe, Kent.

ically eradicate anyone standing in his way.

Thus we must bright to light one of the permanent components of companies: **power**. Power of some individuals over others, power of the manager over the employee or vice versa, of the management over the teams, of the shareholders over the strategy.

心
核
体

Shin Gi Tai
Unification of
mind, technique
and body



Addressing this dimension is a bold task. Firstly, and perhaps because power is a complex notion, and secondly and above all, because it is often taboo. And yet, it is at the heart of many dysfunctions.

What do we mean by power? There are multiple definitions:

1. To have the possibility, the capacity to
2. To know how to, to be able to do
3. To have the right, the authorization to

When we read these definitions, everything is fine, the notion of power just allows us to move

forward. And yet, misused, power can wreak havoc.

Dear Mr. Darwin, we agree: there is a simple rule that allows us to keep a balance, and not to “slip”: for any given responsibility, it is essential to have the right degree of autonomy to assume the responsibility, neither more nor less. The degree of autonomy corresponds to power, in the sense of the verb “can”: to be able to decide on the means and the way to assume the responsibility fully.

Let’s take an example, a tree. The tree does scream to the forest: “This year, I’m growing by 30%!” Would the other trees ask him if he’s okay? Did he take into account his fellow creatures, the natural

resources, and simply, the entire ecosystem? Nature has understood this for a long time and this balance between responsibilities and means is perfect.

Let us illustrate this with an interesting grid that I have enriched and that was originally created by Jacques Fradin, founder of the *Institut de Médecine Environnementale*.

Let’s start with the symptoms. The above grid is a tool to diagnose what is going on, and to “set the system straight”. In the upper right quadrant, the person is in coherence, they have the means to assume their responsibilities. They will feel comfortable, proactive, and this safe space will allow them to

experiment without fear. The upper left quadrant is uncomfortable: the person has to assume responsibilities, for which they do not have all the means, not all the power. This incoherence is often experienced in the body through intense stress, an uncomfortable feeling, the fear of not being able to do it, the fear of being punished, an immobility, because “we don’t know what is going to fall on our heads”. A situation such as this that lasts for a continued period of time is harmful to health.

This approach is systemic, which means that if a person is on the top left, we necessarily have a person on the bottom right for the same responsibility. The latter does not suffer, and rarely sees the consequences of their choices or posture. This is what I call the diagonal of hell, a place of tensions, conflicts, transactions, negotiations. The fourth quadrant, at the bottom left, is also the one where it is better not to be: the person is well present in the system, but they float: they have neither power nor responsibility and they drop out, with a feeling

« The tree does
scream to the forest:
“This year, I’m
growing by 30%!”
Would the other
trees ask him if he’s
okay? »

of uselessness, of nullity, of incomprehension, and of effacement.

Agility, liberated company, transversal approach, process, collective intelligence... all these approaches are fabulous, and I may add: if we stay in the top right quadrant! And our first responsibility is to put ourselves in the upper right-hand corner, to develop what the philosopher Spinoza called “The power to be and to act”.

Dear Mr. Darwin, it seems to me that the human brain is sometimes wrong. There is a lot of research, but what about the use of this magnificent brain we have been given? I am doubtful. The non-reflective part of our brain, called automatic by some, system 1 by

others, too often takes over. Our little limbic amygdala too. And I see many humans tired of what Harari calls “imaginary dogmas”. The one plaguing us right now? Over-investment.

So dear Mr. Darwin, isn’t it time to select the adaptive part of our brain, or system 2, as the “meta-pilot”, the governing system that allows us to step back, to put things into perspective, to question our conditioned tendencies, to calm down, to accept to lose what we have acquired, to change our bad habits, and to stop acting like the tree that howls in the forest: “*This year I am growing by 30%!*”?

For we know, to quote a famous African proverb: “*To make a flower grow, we don’t pull on the stem. We water it, and we watch it grow patiently.*”.

Thank you, Mr. Darwin, for reading through.

Bibliographic reference

Book: Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humanity*, Édition Albin Michel, 2015



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