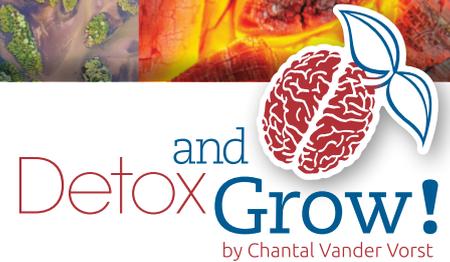


# Our newsletter

## Making change happen

A newsletter for coaching and well-being practitioners



## Open letter to Charles Darwin

# Everyone in the big washing machine!



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Dear Mr Darwin, Dear Charles,

It's me again! We need to continue our little talks, because I'm a little worried about human beings and their ability to be a poison for themselves.

### What is a poison?

**In biology**, poisons are **substances that cause injury, disease or death to organisms through a chemical reaction at the molecular level.**

Yes, human beings, Sapiens Sapiens, are sometimes poisonous to themselves through a slow mechanism that has become almost a habit in many companies.

### What kind of poison is it?

That of a whirlpool into which many humans have fallen. An invisible trap that the body nonetheless quickly perceives: **over-investment.**

The meaning of over-investment from a banking perspective is as follows: *"Excess investment in relation to the company's market or the value of the asset being invested in. On a national scale, over-investment generally leads to economic crisis."*

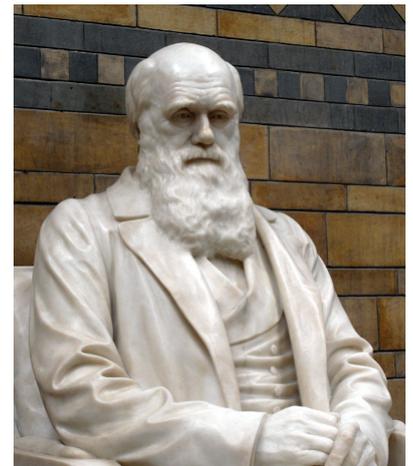
Well, Mr. Darwin, it's the same for humans, except that it's not an economic crisis, but an emotional, somatic and psychic crisis.

Like any poison, it's the dose and duration of exposure that make it toxic. This toxicity is present in all of us, and it's not inevitable.

### Over-investment and addiction: how to recognize them?

Source: *Institut de Médecine Environnementale, Paris.*

- We do too much, with the feeling that it's still not enough, and that it will never be enough;



## 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.

- There is an irrational fear of "not getting there";
- Ambivalence, between aspiration and rejection ;
- A great fear of failure;
- An obsessive psychic tendency, we think about it a lot, all the time;
- Stress, tension, panic.

It's an addictive behavior, just like addiction to sugar, alcohol or any other substance. Except that

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Unification of  
mind, technique  
and body

here, it seems to me more pernicious, because there is no external object (sugar, alcohol...), just a behavior highly **valued socially**: performance, efficiency, generosity, strength, responsibility.

### The big collective washing machine

These behaviors have frequently become the norm in many companies. A socially accepted, socially valued standard.

It's a bit like a large collective washing machine, constantly running on the "spin" cycle.

The motor runs fast, much too fast, the energy consumption of this washing machine is enormous, the motor wears out prematurely, the machine also causes over-voltage in the electrical circuits and fuses can blow. An electrician will be called to restart the system. Of course, it's hard to imagine that the cause of this electrical malfunction is a machine running on the spin cycle all the time. Perhaps it would be a little embarrassing to admit it?

What will happen at some point? The washing machine motor will click and stop.

If this mechanism exists, it is of course biologically useful, but at what cost? Let's take a closer look.

### The root cause

At the heart of this system is a need for recognition and to exist through the eyes of others.

Other people's eyes? But whose eyes are we talking about?

Over-investment is a compensatory mechanism that originates very early in childhood or adolescence. The young human quickly picks up on the signs threatening his integration into the tribe.

If he behaves in a way that doesn't conform to the tribe and makes him feel ridiculous, ashamed and out of place, a defense mechanism will tell him that this behavior is to be banned forever.

This protection enables him to escape the worst of all animal situations: exclusion from the tribe and the risk of finding himself in the wild as prey exposed to potential predators. But at the same

time, this freedom, this behavior, will hinder the path to Self.

You'll understand, dear Charles, that the biological risk is far too great!

Compensation is a mechanism for integration, and is achieved through the adoption of socially conforming behaviors authorized by the tribe. The search for recognition lost at an early age will therefore be an essential driver of over-investment.

All for this, yes.

### How to get out of it?

Good question!

I would recommend two complementary paths:

1. **Managing behavioral addiction;**
2. **Letting go of the root cause.**

Here are a few tips for reducing behavioral addiction:

1. Increase your level of awareness by observing yourself;
2. When the addictive behavior imposes itself on you, anchor yourself to the ground by moving your toes and observing this movement with curiosity;

« It's an addictive behavior, just like addiction to sugar, alcohol or any other substance. »

3. Take 5 deep breaths;
4. Observe your surroundings as if you were seeing them for the first time;
5. Ask yourself the following question 3 times in a row, slowly: *"At this very moment, do I really need to do this?"*
6. Stay still and relaxed;
7. Move very slowly; slowness is one of the worst enemies of over-investment;
8. Were you able to say no to this addiction at that precise moment? CONGRATULATE YOURSELF!

Here are a few tips to let go of the root cause:

1. Ask yourself: *"The worst thing for you is to be labelled as someone..."*. Here are a few ideas for inspiration - a non-exhaustive list, as humans are full of creativity:
  - mediocre
  - useless
  - weak
  - selfish
  - lousy
  - stupid
  - irresponsible
  - vulnerable

« Ask yourself the following question 3 times in a row, slowly: *"At this very moment, do I really need to do this?"* »

- lazy
  - slacking
  - authoritarian
  - ...
2. What are the behaviors that annoy you, or that embarrass you, or that you admire? Focus on those: in these behaviors, what is it that you do not allow yourself to be, to do?
  3. Make way for freedom! In other words, allow yourself to engage in these "horrible" behaviors. This path will take you through emotional and behavioral stages, ultimately freeing you from your social image and fully embracing yourself.

#### An example?

For a long time, I was over-investing in efficiency: Chantal, always

efficient, more and more efficient, and at the same time, I had a strong belief that it was never enough. The root cause? A deep-rooted taboo against being lazy and a slacker.

My medication? Appreciate slowness, relax in the hammock, especially when there's a lot to do.

I'll conclude with this: the theories of self-regulating systems are simple to understand: is too much being done on one side? It's because a path is clogged, and freeing it up will, like communicating vessels, will allow to find balance again.

Charles, I hope the human species, Sapiens Sapiens, doesn't select the over-investment in its genes. Well, if that's the case, either we'll all develop very athletic bodies to keep up with the pace, or the body will win out and impose a return to quieter times.

Chantal Vander Vorst

→ **Detox&Grow!**

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