

## **A TENDENCY TO COMPART- MENTALISE**

In our effort to control the pressurised world around us, we are thinking more than ever in terms of compartments. We categorise people and situations. This helps us to pigeonhole a definite reality that furthermore matches our preconceptions. This is instinctive behaviour and as such is completely natural. If, for example, back in our prehistoric incarnation, we saw a predator, then we would quickly learn to put it into the compartment labelled “Dangerous” so that we would survive another day. One can see this behaviour in young children too: once they have ventured too close to something hot, in goes the experience into the “Be careful, hot!” compartment.

Our left hemisphere thus helps us to assess situations quickly and accurately. This is the side of our brain that creates order, sets limits, likes structure and is home to our self-awareness. The right side of our brain is intuitive, hungry for experience, more organic, associative and limitless in its consciousness.

If our modern society had a brain, it would be easy to conclude that the left hemisphere was more dominant than the right. Just look at the sciences. Rational and analytical thinking has made sure that people and the world are divided into more or less manageable research areas, each with its own

## ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTION

You can expect a number of repercussions when you ask yourself about your inner inspiration. There are strings attached.

If you allow the question to really penetrate, you will feel an impact immediately. Ready to try?

The following visualisation exercise offers you a route into your inner inspiration: beyond the confines of the compart-

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ments in your life. One cannot predict how the exercise will impact on any one person. There are those who find it life-changing, who now look at the choices they make every day with greater clarity. There are others who do not feel anything or seem to get any insight from the exercise but who, a few days

later, see their lives improve. And there are still others who do not really know what they are “supposed” to feel, or what they should do with the experience.

All reactions are perfectly fine. There is nothing that you should feel or experience. Whatever happens is dependant on the stage of your life that you are in, the roles that you are currently playing, the emotions that you feel right now and the choices that you have made up to this point. For this reason,

you can do the exercise more than once. In fact, do it any time you feel stressed, have momentarily lost your way or would like to have a different perspective on yourself and your world.

The chances that it will have a real impact increase if you make a few prior agreements with yourself. These are agreements that allow your intuitive right-brain to be activated as well as your rational left-brain and make it more likely that the visualisation exercise will result in a response from deep within yourself:

### 1. Switch off your expectations

It is completely human when you start something to have a certain picture of what the outcome might be. But when you do, what you are actually doing is putting a piece of reality into a box before that reality even exists: into a box that suits your preconceptions. By switching off all conscious and unconscious expectations, you free up your ability to experience something. You can do this by simply telling yourself: “Whatever the outcome of this experience, it’s fine by me”.

### 2. Use all your senses

Be aware that you are more than just a thinker. That you can also receive information through your senses during this exercise. Some people will suddenly see images, hear

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### **Step 5: The answer**

Use all your senses once more to intercept the answer that emerges from the deeper perspective of where you are now. Keep focusing on the spaces between your thoughts. See, experience, hear, smell or taste whatever surfaces. The answer may come to you in an unexpected way. Just register what happens. If an emotion emerges, that's fine. Give it space and observe it. Allow whatever happens to happen and rest a while in this place of calm epiphany.

### **Step 6: Finish**

If you sense that the visualisation is coming to an end, make a point of saying goodbye to this part of your space that you have now explored. This makes it easier and faster to return to later. Concentrate on your body again. Be aware of your breathing and of all your limbs. You can squeeze your hands together so that you gently "awaken". Become aware of your surroundings again and slowly open your eyes.

### **Step 7: Process**

Keep to yourself a little longer, with your eyes open.

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Don't immediately share your experiences with anyone. Try to hold on to what you experienced long enough to put it down on paper. Make an effort to address the following questions:

- What have I experienced or seen and what emotions did this arouse? (Describe it in your own words, as concretely as possible.)
- What part of it was new or surprising to me?
- What insight does this give me into the life I now lead?

By articulating your experience, you open up a way for new information to enter your consciousness. But you can also draw or visualise it: whatever feels most comfortable to you. You have pulled out pieces of yourself from the deeper perspective that are now being introduced into your "system".

For the next few days, pay attention to what has changed in your mind, your body and your behaviour. Try to recall this experience regularly in the week that follows. Observe how you react and how your insight

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# CONNECTEDNESS FOR CREATIVENESS

## PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

### FROM EGO TO WE-GO

Participatory drive may seem a little selfish at first glance. It seems to require detaching yourself from the world in which you live. You might also think that this entails disassociating yourself and closing yourself off from your environment. Surely the intention cannot be to create a world in which everyone is turned inwards, constantly focusing on their own reality?

Fortunately, this is not what happens in practice. The individual or organisation that searches for its own participatory drive experiences a very interesting paradox. Those who delve into their deeper selves in a sincere attempt to find their inner inspiration notice that they actually become

The ME-WE principle is like an extra dimension that you add on in the knowledge that there is no barrier between you and the world around you. And that you benefit, therefore, when what you do benefits your environment. This is essentially the basic principle of economics, where each party in a relationship must be able to retain an equal stake in the results of the common effort.

The left hemisphere of your brain may protest a little at this. For example, an understandable reaction could be: “Everything you do must be for the good of the whole world as well as yourself? Isn’t that impossible? There would be nothing left that we could do. You can’t be expected to do everything for the good of others?”

Of course not. That’s why it is a principle and not a law or regulation. Rules and regulations make coexistence possible

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by establishing where our personal space ends and the community begins. We need these laws to live in a more or less orderly society. But you cannot make the ME-WE principle enforceable. It does not fall within the remit of organising society according to compartments. Instead, it is an appeal to

your sense of purpose as a human being. It is an endeavour

that makes it worth getting out of bed every day. You do not even need to have inordinate ideals: you could try it just because it feels good.

From the moment you apply this participatory drive principle, you will feel better and more balanced. And slowly but surely, you will get more back from the world around you in the form of appreciation, new insights or financial gain. The more complete and authentic a person you prove yourself to be, the stronger the response that “naturally” arises. Call it a positive boomerang: one that is worth more every time it returns.

A good way to preserve a balance between ME and WE is to employ “expectation management”. Try to apply the ME-WE principle without attaching specific expectations to it, such as “This will earn me more money” or “Now my arch enemy at work will treat me differently”. Such expectations will just put you back in a compartment, one that is dependent on the collusion of the outside world to make your personal aspirations and dreams come true. When you let go of expectations, it is easier to handle any negative reactions. After all, you cannot demand that the whole world instantly joins in with your ME-WE narrative. And it does not have to. Furthermore, you will then have more energy for the nourishing input that also comes your way.

*So with this in mind, we set to work with a retail chain. We practised communication methods focused on real and genuine interactions with people, on listening properly and on giving honest advice. We received incredibly positive feedback from the sales team. The mood was one of stress and submissiveness at the start but it evolved to become one of enthusiasm to see the principle put into practice in the shops. The salesperson who invests in real concern for their customers experiences far more satisfaction in their life and work. A lasting relationship with the customer is forged, meaning that they will be back. And so long as that continues, the salesperson will not be out of pocket.*

In the years to come, the greatest innovations will grow from this principle. This can already be seen in the sharing economy

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(where networks of people from all over the world trade directly with each other or develop products together without the middleman of an organisation or company), and, for example, in the contemporary interpretation of the cooperative system (in which the ownership of companies is in the hands of

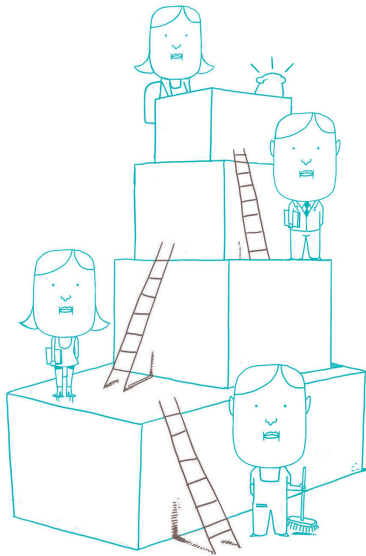
the employees and/or customers, and decisions are made based on ethical values).

Other new ways of living and working together will be created, for which legal frameworks have not yet been imposed. This makes sense: a legal framework is based on compartments, while the ME-WE principle transcends them. An example of this is the alternative taxi service Uber, whose business concept and service in its early days fell outside of all sorts of legal frameworks and presented many governments with a headache.

We are at a turning point today, with so many diverse initiatives that seek to overturn our former structures. And many innovative ideas start out from a principle of value for everyone but soon turn into nothing more than new avenues for generating cash. Before they know it, they have relapsed into old ways of thinking and acting – perhaps because they lack the role models to do otherwise. So we are also in a transitional phase between a purely rational system and a much more balanced economic model. This involves trial and error.

## TOP-DOWN MODEL: STRUCTURE CREATES ORDER

When the Second World War ended, the world needed fresh energy if it was to rise again from the rubble. We looked for clear, unambiguous structures that people could rely on. We know this structure as the top-down model. All walks of life were organised by a narrow top layer and implemented by a broad base.



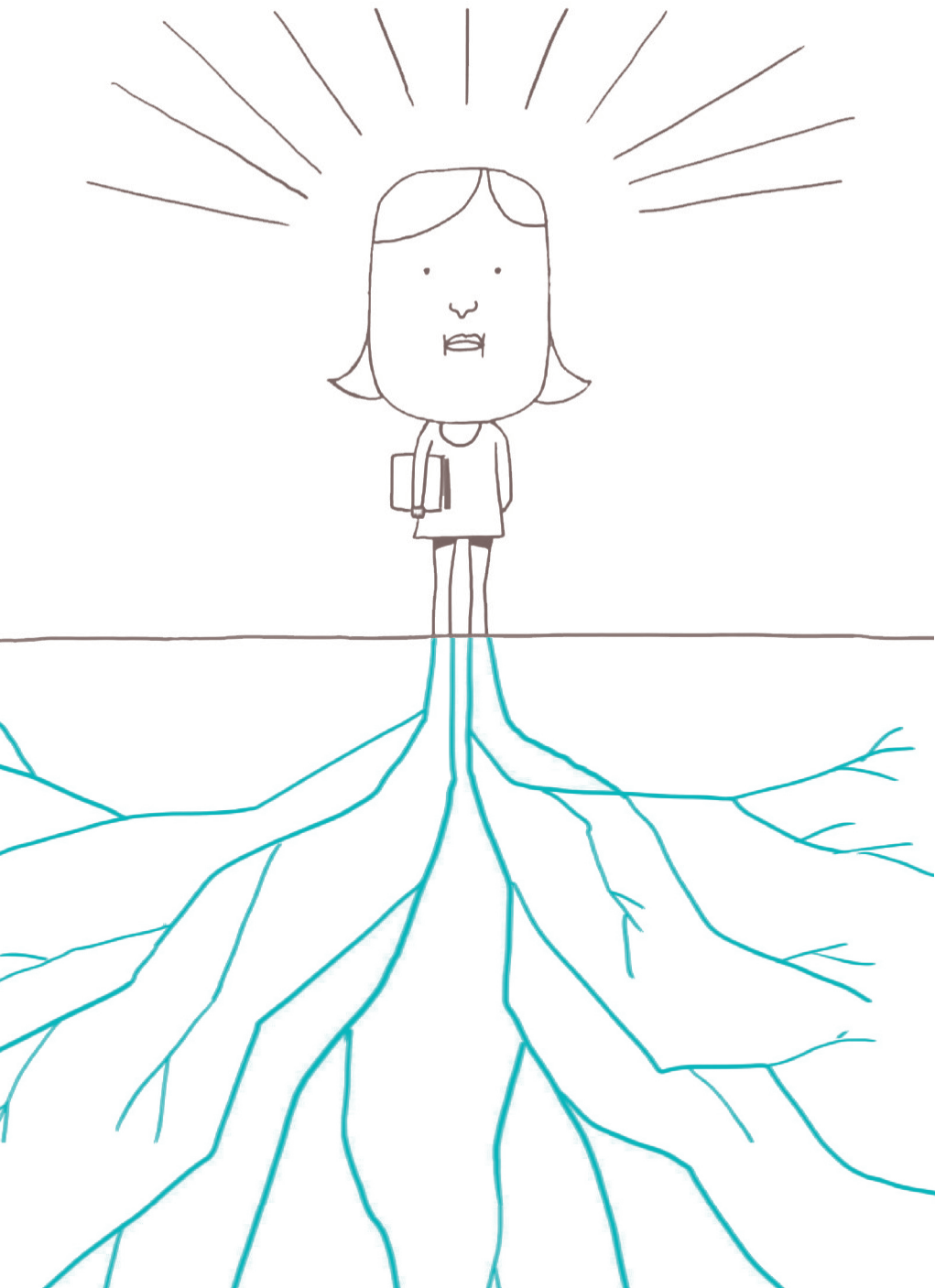
To connect the two levels, there was a highly organised civil society where people pooled their resources. They derived their identity from the group to which they belonged. You were a worker, employer (boss) or farmer. You did your

job, organised to demand your rights, believed in systems, church and state and thus rebuilt your world. There was trust and there were clear agreements.

Naturally, movements came and went that were at odds with the bosses and the governments. For example, in 1968, worldwide protests were aimed at traditional power structures and set in motion closer consultation between the workers and the powers-that-be. But the structure of society remained essentially the same. We see that many veterans of May '68 ended up as managers in very mainstream top-down organisations. There was a lot of opportunity in that period. Society appeared to be malleable because it had such a clear and orderly structure.

## CULTURE MODEL: EVERYONE IS A LEADER

The last turn of the century was accompanied by the usual nervousness and urge to transform. A new technological revolution and a number of crises following on each other's heels turned the "secure" structures of the post-war period on their heads: the government did not appear to be able to protect us any more, banks went bankrupt and religion lost its moral superiority. Since then, a highly individualised, functionally driven economy has stepped in to make its mark on our everyday lives.



# CHARISMATIC ENGAGEMENT

## PARTICIPATORY RESPONSIBILITY

### **PERPETUUM MOBILE OF STRONG CONNECTIONS**

When you apply the first two steps, individually or as a group, you trigger a perpetual motion machine of ever-stronger connections to yourself and the rest of the world. First you silence the noise of daily life by asking yourself about your inner inspiration. And in the process of finding out, you tap into forgotten energy sources in yourself. By releasing them, you become more self-aware and confident. It is as if you have grown deeper roots that penetrate directly into your vitality.

This accelerating power enables you to better understand reality. You feel like a more important part of the world and experience how what is good for someone else is also good



So, when someone steps into the participatory dynamic, they can use their new energy to damage people and to superficially bolster themselves. But the effect can only be short-term because you are actually disempowering yourself. This behaviour does not lead to contentment or happiness since it reattaches the meaning of your life to external perceptions – the opposite of your innermost self. You may notice that you are perhaps regarded as successful above the surface but that you do not feel happier. In response, you may find yourself striving for even more superficial success and becoming even more exhausted in the process of trying to achieve something that is actually alien to your soul. And then you end up right back where you started.

Does this mean that we have to be perfect in our approach? That we must never deviate from the path and commit ourselves to wearing a holier-than-thou straitjacket of self-discipline? Of course not, that would be unlivable and doomed to failure. The secret does not lie in the perfection of the path but in recognising its imperfection. When you are aware of the pitfalls and can deal with them in an open and vulnerable way, are prepared to admit them to the people around you, then you are more likely to stay connected to your source of inspiration. We can only progress by being open and consistent about the principles inherent to our growth and development from a vulnerable human perspective. This is a

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human trajectory so it can only work by a process of trying and failing.

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then you need to pop the bubble of perfection that surrounds you. Especially in your work environment. We are human and therefore enjoy the privilege of learning from repeatedly humbling experiences - so that we can live more intensely.

*The president of a large, successful organisation developed a very people- and community-oriented corporate culture. He built an efficient organisation by placing a strong emphasis on good cooperation practices and by inviting his personnel to embark on personal learning trajectories. He never had problems attracting new talent: people wanted to come and work for him. The man was idolised and had over five hundred people eating out of his hand. He seemed to be perceived as almost a guru by some of his staff. And then he suffered a personal setback: a malignant tumour was found in his body.*

*Fortunately, the diagnosis was made at an early stage of the disease. After undergoing a simple procedure, he could, if he*

*wished, simply continue to work without his employees even noticing that anything was wrong. There were those in his management team who believed that the president should keep his “problem” under wraps so as not to imperil the stability of the organisation. Surely he, the visionary, needed to appear strong and steadfast? What if people were to find out that their “model” was in fact highly vulnerable? In the eyes of some, the man had become the personification of the organisation’s success.*

*After thinking it over for a while, he took the right decision:*

*he told his family, followed by his personnel. He explained what had happened, what emotions it had triggered in him and what the recovery process would entail. The news came like a bombshell to his employees.*

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*But it also brought about a new dimension to the corporate culture. There was no question of the staff feeling insecure or destabilised. On the contrary. The calm support that the man received from them was utterly touching. He felt no sense of isolation during his period of hospitalisation and rehabilitation.*

*Along with this support came an outpouring of personal stories. People found it easier to share their own experiences*