

— Arjen Mulder

SUCCESS SHUNNING AS AN ARTISTIC STRATEGY

What every participant in a course on 'Business for Artists' is aware of but always escapes the course director, is that business requires an opposite strategy to creating something new. The pattern followed by every artist is: first there is nothing, a conceptual vacuum, after which a work develops out of that nothingness. The entrepreneur works the other way around: first there is something, a product, and after it has been marketed all that remains is an abstract value, namely money, the dross of the earth, the nothingness into which every creative genius can plunge in order to let her unique abilities be paralysed. Aren't you exaggerating a little, Mr Mulder? Let me clarify my statements using a number of ideas from the observer of the world Adrien Turel (Saint Petersburg 1890 – Zurich 1957).

THE GENETIC AND THE DYNAMIC

In the first key work from his oeuvre, *Die Eroberung des Jenseits* (1931), Adrien Turel makes a strict distinction between what he calls the genetic and the dynamic type of person. Genetic and dynamic people are not each other's opposites as such, they can complement each other and sometimes even collaborate. But they cannot understand each other, on pain of incapacitating their unique genetic or dynamic abilities.

The dynamic person likes movement. In the dynamic view of the world everything is always in motion, stasis is death. Each material particle is a rushing wave of photons or electrons around cloudy nuclei of subatomic particles. History moves forward and political movements drive it onward. Technology speeds up everything that by nature moves slowly. And so on. The will to conquer and change the outside world is dynamic, but it is striking that the dynamic person remains the same inside, with motives, longings and demands, over and against all fragmentation through the speed that she herself has unleashed. "*Stay hungry. Stay foolish.*"¹ Everybody who aims for movement, wants to merge with a movement or wants to trigger and direct a movement, is dynamic. Mass, power and expansion are the core concepts of the dynamic.

The dynamic person wants to improve everything that exists. She causes all fixed objects to melt into thin air and all old relationships to break up in order to be able to race between them faster or, even better, through them. Staying ahead of one's own shadow, always moving towards the light. Progress! Technology is the main means of making everything that has been made even better. What the dynamic person strives for is to bring every process under human control and to set it elegantly,



or if necessary, clumsily to work. *What comes next?* is the perpetual question of the dynamic person. The present is a station to be passed, an object of observation and monitoring in search of traces of future, shadows cast ahead. The past is a burden that you should leave behind. The only thing that survives is what works and sells, is the motto of the dynamic person.

That cloud of starlings over that meadow there, the dynamic person explains, is able to swerve abruptly and soar because each individual bird follows just a handful of algorithms. Fly behind the bird in front and ahead of the bird behind, but don't do it too closely. Keep a distance from your neighbours to the left and right, below and above, but again keeping a strategic distance. And avoid obstacles. That is ultimately how every mass functions, even when human beings are the particles.

The genetic person will reply to this that the Riemannian geometry of the swarm is indeed based on just a handful of algorithms, but

will add that for the making of starlings that can exhibit such swarming behaviour some 150 million years of evolution were necessary, from the first feathered dinosaurs onwards. The simple rules can only be used if a complex creature like a starling has been produced through an evolutionary process that besides chances of survival also always factors in the pleasure of play.

DOING OR BECOMING

Natural logic is genetic in nature. Everybody that is developing or going through a metamorphosis, that is changing within its own boundaries and within the possibilities and restrictions of its natural and social environment, is genetic. For this it needs rest, time to turn inwards and there set in motion an unruly development in order to convert itself from inside outwards into something that previously did not exist. The genetic digs itself in: it is a body in stasis, pre-eminently a-dynamic.

Genetic people are the inventors and discoverers who make one brilliant find after another with which they can change the course of history forever – but they cannot manage to do it themselves. They simply can't do it. Turel writes of Friedrich Nietzsche, for him a striking example of the genetic human type:

*Like the eggs of birds or the pupae of butterflies, Nietzsche is one of those natures that only become and therefore do nothing, cannot act.*²

The opposition is therefore not between becoming and being, as many philosophers maintain, or between movement and stasis – they complement each other. The opposition is between becoming and doing, between metamorphosis and action. Not being able to do anything doesn't mean not getting up to mischief and lying lazily on your sofa watching YouTube videos on your tablet – that's far too active. Not being able to do anything means: not exercising or having exercised any force on the genetic process that is underway in you. Force as in: it must be a success! Where success means: make lots of money if you sell your work or invention or text to some monopolist. In short: if you become an entrepreneur.

It is important to understand the difference between the genetic and the dynamic from a point of view outside both positions, although each individual at any given moment in the day, is partially genetic and partially dynamic, depending on age, situation and work environment. Turel:

*A great genetic person knows very well how dynamic people (Bismarck or Rockefeller) do business, but he can't do it himself without making his genetic development seize up, and so for decades he must suffer deeply from the tantalising torture of not being allowed to do anything.*³

Genetic persons cannot act without disturbing their own development. They understand perfectly well how a business operates and

the share of sales and marketing in it. They also know that bosses can be useful as leaders, course-setters and guardians of the economic base. But power doesn't interest them, it slides off them, without penetrating. Geneticists are immune to it.

Nice idea, says the dynamic person, let's do it. I see the challenge and sense big opportunities. Sorry, I haven't got time for you right now, replies the genetic person. I'm working on something, well, what'll it be? But when it's finished... The dynamic person knows that the world is on her side, what she does is useful for us all or in any case for her target group or shareholders. The dynamic people themselves determine what usefulness is. A genetic person in turn does not do anything terribly useful. Looks suspiciously like navel-gazing. A dynamic person can go under heroically, a genetic person only fail pitifully.

SUCCESS SHUNNING

No, failure isn't the word. The genetic person must do everything actively to avoid success, because with success comes the pressure to recreate success, again and again, making a cliché of what was once an original, living idea. The genetic person does everything once and if it works it's time for something else, and if it fails that is also an interesting outcome, move on to the next unique idea.

The genetic person is extremely vulnerable in her passivity. Protection in a nest (cave, garret, a room of one's own) is urgently necessary for every genetic person. Camouflage and mimesis are the only weapons. Don't mind me. Just let me do my own thing. Then in a while you'll get to see something you've never experienced. The lightness of fresh ideas, the ease with which they create themselves if you let them go where they want, regardless of your all too human agenda.

In order to have and test out a previously undemonstrated idea the genetic person must transform her own body, by conducting

experiments on it and then train and renew it in a focused way. The alchemical model of spiritual purification which the philosopher must go through to make new gold from old metal in his retorts, is pre-eminently genetic. One experiences in one's own body what will later happen to everyone's body.

The first thing that has to be transformed genetically is the power of sight. Only with a vision that you have never used before can you perceive unfiltered and fully accept what you see. The fresh look is a closed look that has been broken open. From within the body of the genetic person, that is. The same applies to the open ear, the fine nose, the subtle sense of touch, empathy and sympathy, aesthetic distance, hospitality, landlord's flair.

For Turel, Michael Faraday is the pre-eminent example of the genetic human type. Faraday (1791-1867), son of a blacksmith, never followed any formal scientific training, but is the inventor and discoverer of the following: the first known aromatic substance, benzene; the physical phenomenon of electromagnetic induction; a rubber air balloon; the electrical condenser; the optical-magnetic Faraday effect; Faraday's radiation-free cage, and his greatest discovery: electro-magnetic radiation, the basis of our wire-less communication society.

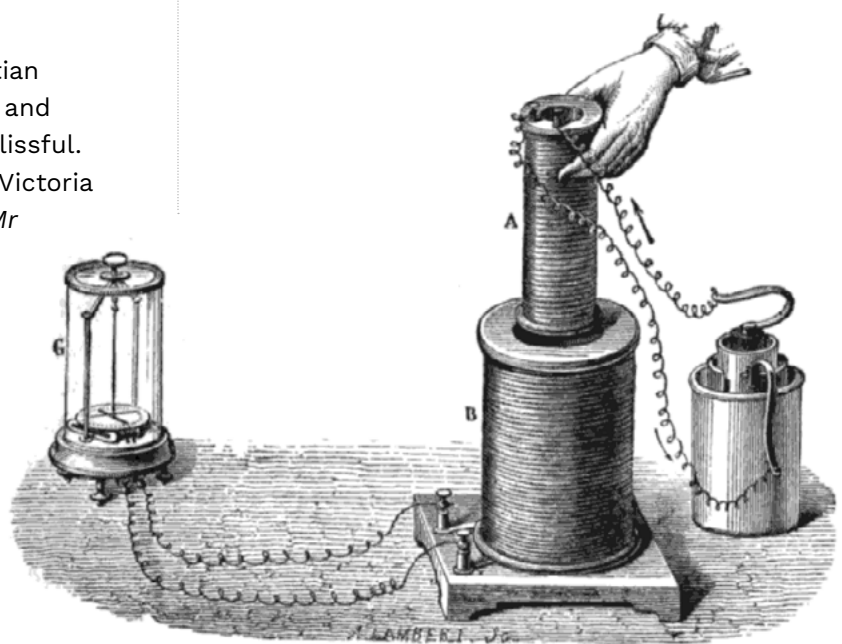
The Sandemanian variant of his Christian belief forbade Faraday to save money and consequently he died in penury, but blissful. He refused a knighthood from Queen Victoria because he preferred to remain *just Mr Faraday*. Michael Faraday can rightly be called a success shunner. Earning money did not interest him, he wanted only to *become* and hence could not act, not *do*, and least of all do business.

The dynamic antipode to Faraday in Turel's version of history, is the industrial magnate Emil Ratenau (1838-1915), the businessman who

brings Faraday's inventions onto the market in the form of consumer products, saleable merchandise. As the founding director of the Allgemeine Elektrizität Gesellschaft (AEG), a manufacturer of electronic components and appliances, he soon finds himself in charge of a business worth millions.

And what inventions this industry produces! Without a reliable source of electricity there is no film, radio, TV, video, tape recorder, telephone, wire-less communication, the whole computer age with the Cold War, PC, internet and mobile media and all. The entertainment industry, Hollywood, Babelsberg, Cinecittà – more secure investments than fossil fuels or agricultural produce. The sixth continent of speed. Faraday captured Zeus' mythical lightning in a technical apparatus, an adjustable source of energy.

Michael Faraday is one hundred percent the genetic inventor, only interested in new ideas and opportunities for research. The entrepreneur Ratenau is a supremely dynamic person who makes an economic and financial megasuccess from Faraday's inventions. If Emil Ratenau had been able to offer Michael Faraday a job in his business, as head of the lab or just imagine a position, the genetic person would probably



From Arthur William Poyser (1892) *Magnetism and electricity: A manual for students in advanced classes*, Drawing attributed to Lambert, J.

have pined away and extinguished like Bartleby in Melville's story. *I would prefer not to.*

But Faraday was able to protect his genetic ability from the pressure of the dynamic people of his time. Intellectual victories were what he wanted. Every social or financial ambition was alien to him. As a result, he became someone who changed the world irreversibly. He turned the starting switch of the global process of electrification and computerisation, of which we are, in human terms, the provisional result.

THE SOCRATES PERSON

Turel distinguishes a third type of person on the route from astonishing invention to industrial product, whom he calls the *Vermittler*, the intermediary, translator, go-between, or the midwife. Or better still the *Socrates person*. The one who asks the correct questions of the genetic person about her/his exploration of the new and converts the answers into statements or products which the dynamic people in the known world can understand and/or mass-produce – and vice versa. Between a genetic person like Faraday and a dynamic person like Ratenau stands an inventor-entrepreneur like Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931). Turel, in *Die Eroberung des Jenseits*:

Someone like Edison does not exhibit the completely embryonic and at the same time senile helplessness of purely genetic people, who can anyway take their ideas and achievements only to the threshold of dynamic birth, where those ideas are regularly wrenched from their grasp and stolen from them by dynamic people. Edison was not only responsible for inventions like the gramophone and the electric light bulb, but he also had the industrial energy to set up a factory that was well on the way to gaining a monopoly position in their manufacture.

The way he speculated in this by agreeing a selling price that was five times lower than his own production costs at the time he entered into the relevant contract, surpassed in

advance Henry Ford's later way of doing business. But as soon as Edison has standardised and improved production to the point where his production price is lower than the contractual selling price, hence precisely at the moment when a dynamic entrepreneur of the Rockefeller type would come on board, Edison sells the factory for the in fact extraordinarily modest sum of one million dollars and returns to the genetic danger zone of new inventions.

According to 19th-century psychology you might say that this is a characteristic of a nervous nature, since it can live only in risk areas, zones of probability and improbability. However, such a characterisation is far too vague and far too timid. A characteristic of a relatively genetic person like Edison is not only the preference for risk and the all-or-nothing game of constantly new invention probabilities. A characteristic of genetic people is mainly the embryonic use of all surpluses and profits in order to develop their own substance further.⁴

The latter point is an important addition. When a genetic person earns money, she uses it to withdraw from the dynamic world and to allow her creative powers to follow their own path. What the relatively genetic person Edison discovered in the outside world about technical possibilities which he developed into a production process with a business plan and an earning model, was not enough for him. Even after his success the whole world still awaited exploration and development.

To develop their own substance further relates to the body of the genetic person and her genetic capacities, her path to the future. The outcome of the course of probability may be science, mathematics, technology, literature, visual art or architecture: as long as the work is not finished nothing is thrown away or declared redundant by the genetic person. The surpluses are not rubbish but junk: building materials for what is not yet anything but wants to become something. A new body in a new environment.



STEVE JOBS AS A SOCRATES PERSON

Edison, as a Socrates person or translator of the genetic and dynamic zones of electricity, is in effect the organiser of the pupation process from caterpillar to butterfly – Turel's main example of a natural genetic process. In the pupa, with precisely the same organic material and the same genes, from a fat caterpillar's body that can do nothing but eat, a frivolous butterfly's body is constructed that can fly and sip nectar, have sex and reproduce. The organisation of this metamorphosis is in the hands of the imaginal discs in the body of the caterpillar. The Socrates person nestles in the body of the genetic person as an imaginal disc.

Thomas Edison is the dynamic translator of Faraday's genetic ideas and produces appliances and an industry worthy of AEG, but in a following round he himself again goes genetically in search of discoveries from the world that Faraday pried open 50 years previously. From the later Edison's portfolio of inventions: the dictaphone, the phonograph with wax cylinders, the electric bulb, the film projector, the electric chair.

In the development of the personal computer between 1950 and 2005 we find the type of the genetic person Faraday, the dynamic person Ratenau and the Socrates person Edison in the inventor Doug Engelbart, the businessman Bill Gates and entrepreneur-designer Steve Jobs respectively. Doug Engelbart develops the graphic interface, the mouse and the internet, but earns scarcely anything from them. Bill Gates does not invent anything, but gives a dynamic boost to the software by selling it separately from the hardware and rakes in millions in the process. Steve Jobs' original idea was that the important thing in using computers is not the qualities of the hardware of the software, but the *user experience*: the designer must give this form.

Steve Jobs was twice able to work with real genetic people – Steve Wombat with Apple 1 and 2 and Jony Ive with the iMac, iPhone and iPad – and managed to make commercial successes of their inventions. When he himself as a dynamic entrepreneur wanted to develop the Mac, he first stole the idea from Engelbart and then forced his design teams into a burn-out from which they never fully recovered.

Only after his own failure as a genetic person with Next did he come to understand how you should treat real genetic people in order to get them to make great achievements: leave them in peace and have them collaborate with interesting people.

Dynamic rest is genetic work. Dynamic work is genetic rest. This was how Turel summarised his insight. And: Shunning success is the watchword! The roots of creativity lie in our capacity to develop in complete calm, instead of having to be constantly charging onward, to keep moving, to be stirred up, to be dynamic. The purely dynamic approach never produces more than an innovation, a modification in something that already exists. Only the genetic method leads to something new, a way out of what exists.

The active refusal to have success is the price the genetic person must pay not to sell their own soul, but to experience the happiness of achieving something real instead of putting more rubbish on the planet. Genetic man, look to your interests! Kick out the dynamic manager and start for yourself. Find a Socrates person, but beware of swindlers! You won't get rich, but you can save the world! A new earth is calling, now the old one is going under from the dynamism that has been unleashed.

Abandon all success, you who want to enter the future.

REFERENCES

1. Quoted from the back cover of the 1974 edition of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. It was infamously re-quoted in Steve Jobs commencement speech at Stanford University in 2005.
2. 'Friedrich Nietzsche gehört zu den großen Genetikern, das heißt zu den Wesenheiten, die, wie die Embryonen der Menschen und der Säugetiere, wie die Eier der Vögel, wie die Puppen der Schmetterlinge nur "werden" und daher nichts "tun", nicht handeln können.' Adrien Turel, *Die Eroberung des Jenseits*, Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, Berlin 1931, p. 9.
3. '... ein großer Genetiker weiß ganz gut, wie die Dynamiker Bismarck oder Rockefeller ihre "Geschäfte" machen, aber er darf es nicht selbst tun, ohne seine genetische Bewegung zum Erstarren zu bringen, und so muß er jahrzehntelang schwer unter der Tantalusqual des Nichttundürfens leiden.' Adrien Turel, idem p. 10.
4. 'Auch ein Mensch wie Edison zeigt nicht die völlige embryonale und zugleich greisenhafte Hilflosigkeit der reinen Genetiker, welche die Ideen und Leistungen überhaupt nur bis an die Schwelle der dynamischen Geburt heranbringen können, wo sie ihnen regelmäßig von Dynamikern entrissen und geraubt werden. Edison hat nicht nur Erfindungen wie das Grammophon und wie die Glühlampe gemacht, er hat auch die industrielle Energie gehabt, eine Fabrik zu organisieren, welche auf dem beste Wege war, eine Monopolstellung in dieser Fabrikation zu erringen. Auch die Art und Weise, wie er dabei spekulierte, indem er einen Verkaufspreis mit den Abnehmern kontraktlich ausmachte, der um das mehr als Fünffache niedriger war als seine eigenen Herstellungskosten zur Zeit, als er die betreffenden Verträge abschloß, übertraf im voraus das Fordsche System. Aber sobald er die Herstellung so normiert und verbessert hatte, daß sein Herstellungspreis unter dem kontraktlichen Verkaufspreis lag, also gerade im Moment, wo ein dynamischer Industrieller und Händler vom Typus Rockefeller voll einsetzen würde, verkauft Edison die Fabrik für den im Grunde außerordentlich bescheidenen Preis von einer Million Dollar und begibt sich in die genetische Gefahrenzone neuer Erfindungen zurück.

Nach der Psychologie des 19. Jahrhunderts hätte man vielleicht sagen können, dies sei das Kennzeichen einer nervöse Natur, welche nur im Gebiete des Risikos, der Wahrscheinlichkeit und der Unwahrscheinlichkeit leben könne. Aber eine solche Charakterisierung ist viel zu unbestimmt und viel zu timide. Charakteristisch für einen relative Genetiker wie Edison ist nicht allein die Liebe zum Risiko und zum Vabanquespiel immer neuer Erfindungswahrscheinlichkeiten, charakteristisch ist für den Genetiker vor allem die Embryonalverwendung aller Überschüsse und Gewinne zur Entfaltung der eigenen Substanz.' Idem, p.10-11.

Note

This is a slightly modified excerpt from my book *De successtaker, Adrien Turel en de wortels van de creativiteit* (The Success Shunner: Adrien Turel and the Roots of Creativity), 1001 Publishers, Amsterdam, 2016.

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