

# Do you want to get the best out of your people? Manage relations, not individuals



**HARIDIMOS TSOUKAS,  
UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK, UK**



## A story:

The fortnightly meeting between admin and teaching staff in a school does not go well. Teachers dominate, while administrators are passive.

The school does not get the best out of this.

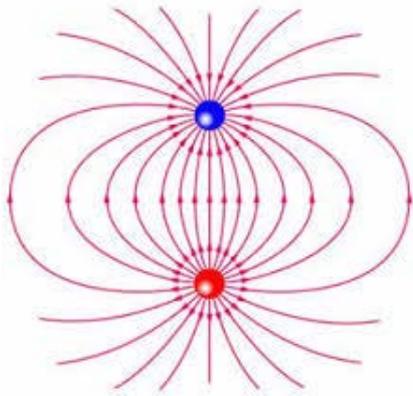


### Questions:

- (a) Why? What stops participants contributing?*
- (b) How could the organization get the best out of its people?*

## Undesirable behaviors we see:

- “apathetic”, “indifferent”,  
“lacking initiative”



## What we do *not* see:

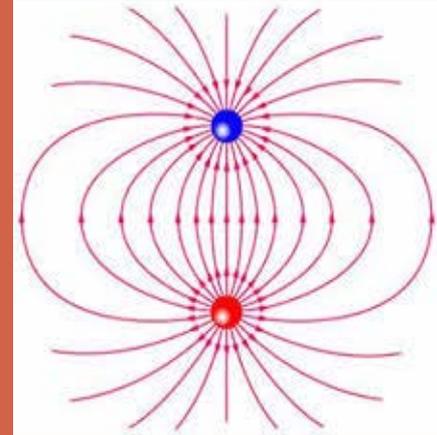
- The context/field/background  
generating behaviors

## What we would like to see:

- active participation, lively  
cooperation, productive reasoning,  
initiative and responsibility

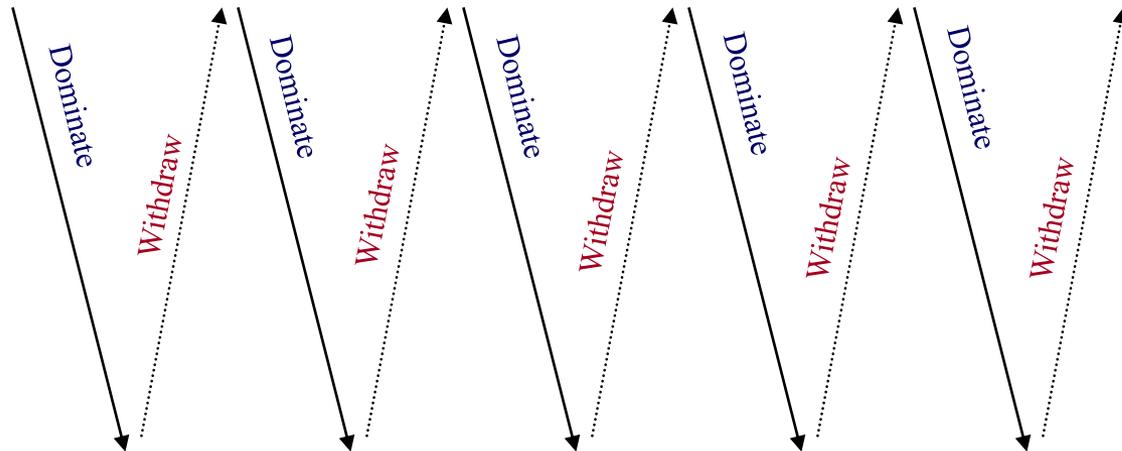


# The invisible context/field



**Teachers**

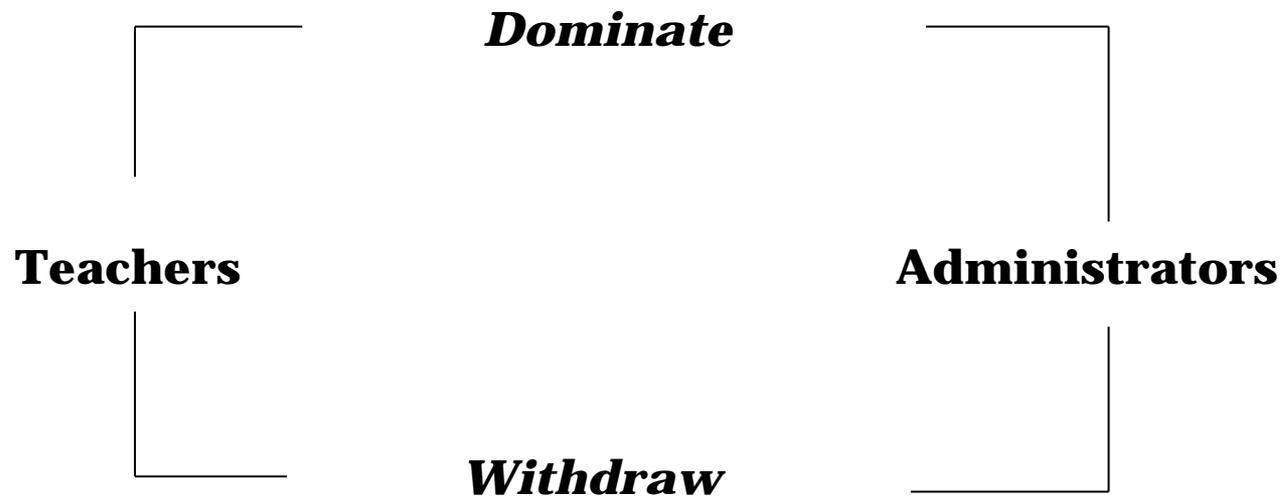
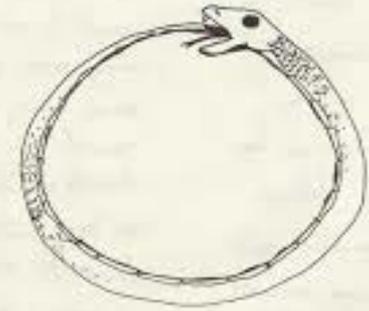
1 X      3 X      5 X      7 X      9 X      11 X



**Administrators**

X      X      X      X      X  
2      4      6      8      10

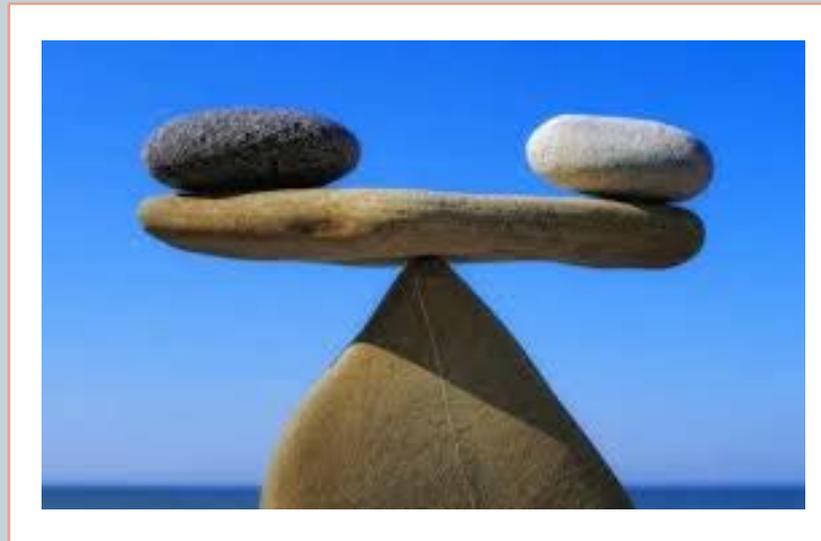
# Vicious circles



To bring about what you would like to see, create a new context

**How?**

**Manage relations, not individuals**



# Manage relations, not individuals (1/6)

**How?**

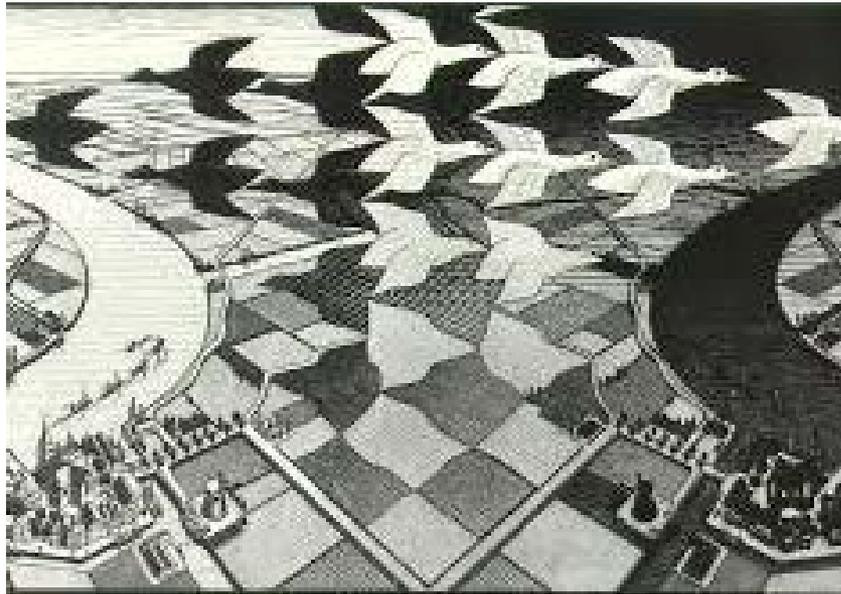
- **Allocentric**  
[other-directed]



## Manage relations, not individuals (2/6)

**How?**

- See from within the *emerging whole*  
[you are not a detached observer but an engaged participant]



# Manage relations, not individuals (3/6)

**How?**

- Let the background emerge  
[you notice new things, including your role]



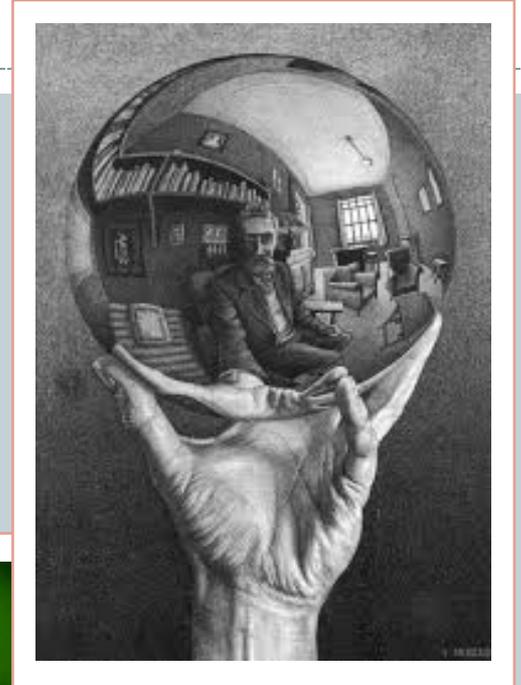
# Manage relations, not individuals (4/6)

**How?**

- **Suspension: see your seeing**

[notice and suspend your habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting;  
nonjudgmental awareness:  
observe without forming conclusions]

In suspension, we notice emerging events and patterns that we did not notice before



## Manage relations, not individuals (5/6)

**How?**

- **Redirection:**

[turn your attention towards the emerging whole - the big picture - and your role in helping create/maintain/change it]



*“What am I doing to help maintain the dysfunctional pattern?”*

# Manage relations, not individuals (6/6)

**How?**

- **Moment of awakening**  
[you are a part of the problems you manage – A new attitude emerges]



# Two opposite examples (1/2)



## (1) *Nightmares in the Kitchen*

[http://www.tuube.com/watch?v=\\_p3pFpVr2Cw](http://www.tuube.com/watch?v=_p3pFpVr2Cw)

("The Secret Garden" - 1.03-3.01 mins)

- Notice how:
  - (a) Michel talks about himself,
  - (b) His staff talks about Michel and the restaurant

# Two opposite examples (2/2)



## *(2) Invictus*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHqi6ZB\\_F0U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHqi6ZB_F0U)

- Notice:
  - (a) the body guard's objection to the Special Branch white officers;
  - (b) how Mandela responds



**Take home  
message:**

**Manage  
relations,  
not  
individuals**

