



Olivier
Onghena-
't Hooft
∞ The
Book
of Noble
Purpose



LANNOO
CAMPUS

**I dedicate this book to
the beauty of Life.**

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1

My passion to inspire

'Great knowledge is not the same as wisdom.'

(Schopenhauer)



Why have I written this book?

To inspire people with the power, impact and beauty of purpose.
To prompt them to reflect on their own Life and how they can get the most out of that Life by giving it purpose.

To encourage the leaders of companies to think about what they and their organisations stand for. And how they can stimulate the people in those organisations to commit themselves fully and give the best of themselves with a powerful feeling of engagement and flow. By motivating them to build organisations where purpose is the leitmotif, a leitmotif that can influence society in a positive and sustainable manner.

To inspire political leaders to act from a real spirit of engagement with the following generations and not simply from a desire to be re-elected. By opening their eyes to the need to build cities, regions, communities and societies with a purposeful future, where participation, collectivism, equivalence, welfare and prosperity are combined.

I have experienced for myself, in my personal, relational, social and business Life, the remarkable role that a noble purpose can play and the huge impact it has had. Since I have been encouraging the people in my immediate environment to live and work with a noble purpose and have developed a socially relevant activity around that theme through GINPI (the Global Inspiration and

Noble Purpose Institute), I can see every day in concrete terms what such a purpose can do with and for people, organisations and systems. I have also seen how people in society are clamouring with an ever-louder voice for greater purpose and how the economy is shifting towards a mechanism that is oriented on sustainability, added value, a more aware form of capitalism and responsible stakeholders. These observations and convictions are what I wish to share with you transparently in this book.

My purpose is to initiate in people – people of all kinds, without distinctions based on social class, family background, ethnic origin, cultural, religious or philosophical conviction, or a person's role and place in society – a process of reflection, in the hope that this will allow them to look in a different way at Life and at the giving and taking of work. It is not my intention to try and convince people of a particular theory or point of view. All I expect is that people will engage in healthy conversations and develop clear and well-grounded positions.

In this way, I hope to energise as many people as I possibly can to ask themselves the following questions, not only for themselves, but also for the systems in which they work, or in which they give leadership or of which they are owners: 'Why do I do what I do? Why do we do what we do?'

I have written this book for everyone who is interested in living a purposeful Life.

For people who are concerned to make a positive and sustainable impact. In fact, for everyone who is interested in Life, since Life without purpose is not really living. In other words, for every Human being who wants to escape from 'the mediocrity of Life' and wishes to find great(er) satisfaction and 'flow' in a new kind of Life, by looking in a totally different way at what you do and

why. For everyone who wishes to make a purposeful contribution based on what he does and how he does it.

For every leader who wants to have an impact on society through the realisation of the noble purpose of the organisation, company or authority for which he is responsible or to which he makes a contribution.

For every entrepreneur-owner who wishes to follow a new path with his company, a path that focuses on something more than short-term profit but is based instead on a strategy and a new organisational culture created around a noble purpose.

For every leader of people and teams, who wants to inspire his people to give the best of themselves and inspire his teams to achieve outstanding levels of performance.

For everyone who has understood that entrepreneurship and leadership in pursuit of a noble purpose offers limitless possibilities but does not yet know how to release and harness those possibilities within his own organisation or team.

For every entrepreneur and leader who still wishes to be convinced about the way in which a noble purpose for his company or organisation will contribute towards the creation of (substantially more) human happiness, a better society and greater economic relevance, with all the direct and indirect positive effects this will cause.

This book is about the importance of giving purpose to our existence as human beings, to the organisations in which we work or give leadership, and to the society in which we live.

The starting point for my book is the philosophy and the purpose to which I have devoted my Life in recent years. In other words,

the things I stand for as a human being, as a person: inspiring as many of the world's high impact leaders as possible to focus on the creation of joy, harmony and beauty for the benefit of the future evolution and prosperity of humankind, society and the world.

Chapter 2 is about my own transformation to a conscious and happy Life of purpose. I will tell you how, like a bolt from the blue, in 1994 I was unexpectedly involved in a brutal kidnapping, an event that led me to ask what is probably the most crucial of all Life's questions: why am I alive? And in my case, following that drama: why am I still alive?

That kidnapping was the moment that changed everything, a tipping point. It set me on a path that forced me to leave my own comfort zone, so that I could realise my true purpose. Ever since that moment, I have been searching for inspiration, for Life-changing lessons and for Life-changing teachers who could help me to find the focus and the power that would lead me to discover the true essence of myself. As a result, I now see Life through rose-tinted spectacles. My glass is always half full, never half empty. This magical transformation has made it possible for me to reconnect with my deepest inner being, so that I can live a purposeful Life, based on concrete values and principles.

Chapter 3 is about the beauty and power of noble purpose. What is it? What is it not? How does it work? How important is transformation in the development of a lasting noble purpose? Using a highly spiritual approach, based on the theory of the four bodies, I will explain why having a noble purpose actually forms the very core of human beings, organisations and society.

In *Chapter 4*, I will go deeper into the essence of our lives: why do we live and how do we achieve self-realisation? We do not have different Lives, but there are different facets in our Life. Ideally, we

need to keep those different facets in balance. If that balance is lost, it is important to know how it can be restored by making the right choices. Making choices, paying a price, restoring balance: these can all be achieved with relative ease, providing we are in contact with our noble purpose. I will also explain why the vast majority of people do not have this contact and, as a result, have become disconnected from their true selves, so that they no longer have any real commitment to what they do. In these circumstances, people search for comfort instead of purpose; the easy option instead of self-disciplined persistence; material success instead of spiritual balance. By doing instead of being and by failing to ask the right questions, they allow themselves to become the victims of a new form of post-industrial slavery. In my opinion, the only way they can free themselves from this servitude is by evolving from a position where they are negatively weighed down by the burden of their work to a situation where they can positively embrace their work with zeal. This involves making clear choices about the best way to achieve purposeful self-realisation.

In *Chapter 5*, I will discuss just how vital the concept of noble purpose will be for the future of organisations in a VUCA world in transformation. Organisations must evolve into ecosystems, in which people can obtain genuine self-fulfilment in a sustainable manner by serving the unique noble purpose for which the organisation stands and which the organisation actively promotes.

I will argue for the transformation of organisations from soulless machines focused on production and short-term results to empathic ecosystems with an organisational culture based on purpose and ‘LovInShip’. I will re-interpret the traditional ‘assets’ and ‘liabilities’ of the balance sheet and put forward the concept of ‘IT-WE-I’. I will explain the true nature of organisational culture and how organisational energy can be released, as well as highlighting the important values and principles this involves.

The penultimate chapter is about the new kind of society that is gradually developing, in which the old ways have had their day and are being replaced by new government authorities and public bodies that will give meaning and purpose to humankind and society. I will discuss the huge societal changes that are heading our way in the coming decades and also highlight people's new expectations within that changed society. How will a new class of enterprising political leaders, blessed with a long-term vision, deal with these changes and give them shape?

Finally, I will draw a number of conclusions that summarise the ideas and concepts contained in this book and will hopefully prompt you to self-reflection and action.

The book will also offer a wide range of examples from my own Life, career and entrepreneurship. My aim is to share these experiences in a way that makes as clear and as concrete as possible the various insights that I have been able to draw from my personal, social and business contexts.

Why is this so important? Because ultimately it is my hope and my intention that *The Book of Noble Purpose* will make a contribution to the general progress and welfare of humankind, society and the world, based on an authentic, transparent, self-experienced and well-developed approach!

2

A present from Life for Life

**'Write the bad things that are done to you in sand
but write the good things that happen to you
on a piece of marble.'**

(Kahlil Gibran)



11 January 1994

Since I was a teenager, I have kept a diary. Sometimes my entries were frequent and intense. Sometimes I would write nothing for weeks on end. It all depended on how I felt, how much time I had and how much I needed to get something off my chest by writing it down. Over the years, it has now become my habit to write down whatever inspires me and whatever I find remarkable about a particular day or experience. I have discovered that this has a marvellously therapeutic effect and offers deep insights into who I am and the things that are important to me.

At special moments, I like to look back through my old diaries and leaf through their pages. It always amazes me how my words can take me back through time to the moment they were written, so that I can relive what I thought and felt, almost as if it were yesterday. The power of the human memory is unbelievable. And the insights that this allows you to acquire are truly remarkable.

That is precisely what happened to me when I recently read through my diary from January 1994, while staying at Terkameren Abbey, an inspiring and restful haven of calm not far from our Brussels residence. More specifically, the eleventh day of that month and year is one that I will never forget. What a Life experience that turned out to be...

I would like to share it with you.

Suddenly, I saw the light. The light was all around me, but I didn't know where I was. Slowly, I regained consciousness, but I was still drowsy from the pungent smell, the nature and origin of which I could not immediately place. My mind was in a state of total confusion. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion, not least my own thoughts and sense of awareness. Where was I? What had happened? How long had I been lying here? I was sprawled uncomfortably half on and half off the back seat of a car. I could smell its expensive leather, mingled with the sharper undertones of spilt petrol and burnt flesh. Around me, I could feel what seemed to be a sticky mess. I could now also feel the pain coursing through my body, without being able to say precisely where it was situated or what had caused it. There was a haze in front of my eyes and a ringing sound in my ears. I felt afraid and had no idea what was going on. But there was one thing that I did know; something was very badly wrong.

My confusion was complete. But somehow my survival instinct took over. 'Get out of the car,' I thought to myself. 'If you stay here, you are going to die.' I tried to pull myself up but was immediately overcome by dizziness. Losing my balance, I fell back onto the seat. But I knew instantly I had to make a second attempt. Gripped by panic and suddenly all too clearly aware of how much danger I was in, I heaved myself into a sitting position, so that I could roll out of the open door. I crashed to the ground with a bump, still not realising that it was Oscar's BMW that I had just fallen from. I opened my eyes, but was instantly blinded by the glaring headlights of a second car – a car that I now know to have been driven by our kidnappers.

From then on, things moved fast. I began with all my might – you have no idea just how much strength you have until your Life is in danger – to drag myself away from the car with my arms and elbows. Without knowing or caring where I was going, I crawled