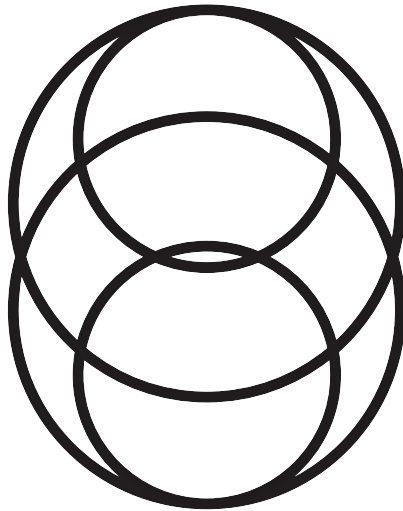


ELS VAN STEIJN

# THE FOUNTAIN CELEBRATE YOUR LIFE



UNDERSTAND THE ART OF  
FULLY EMBRACING YOUR LIFE

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Love is the only thing that multiplies when you share it.

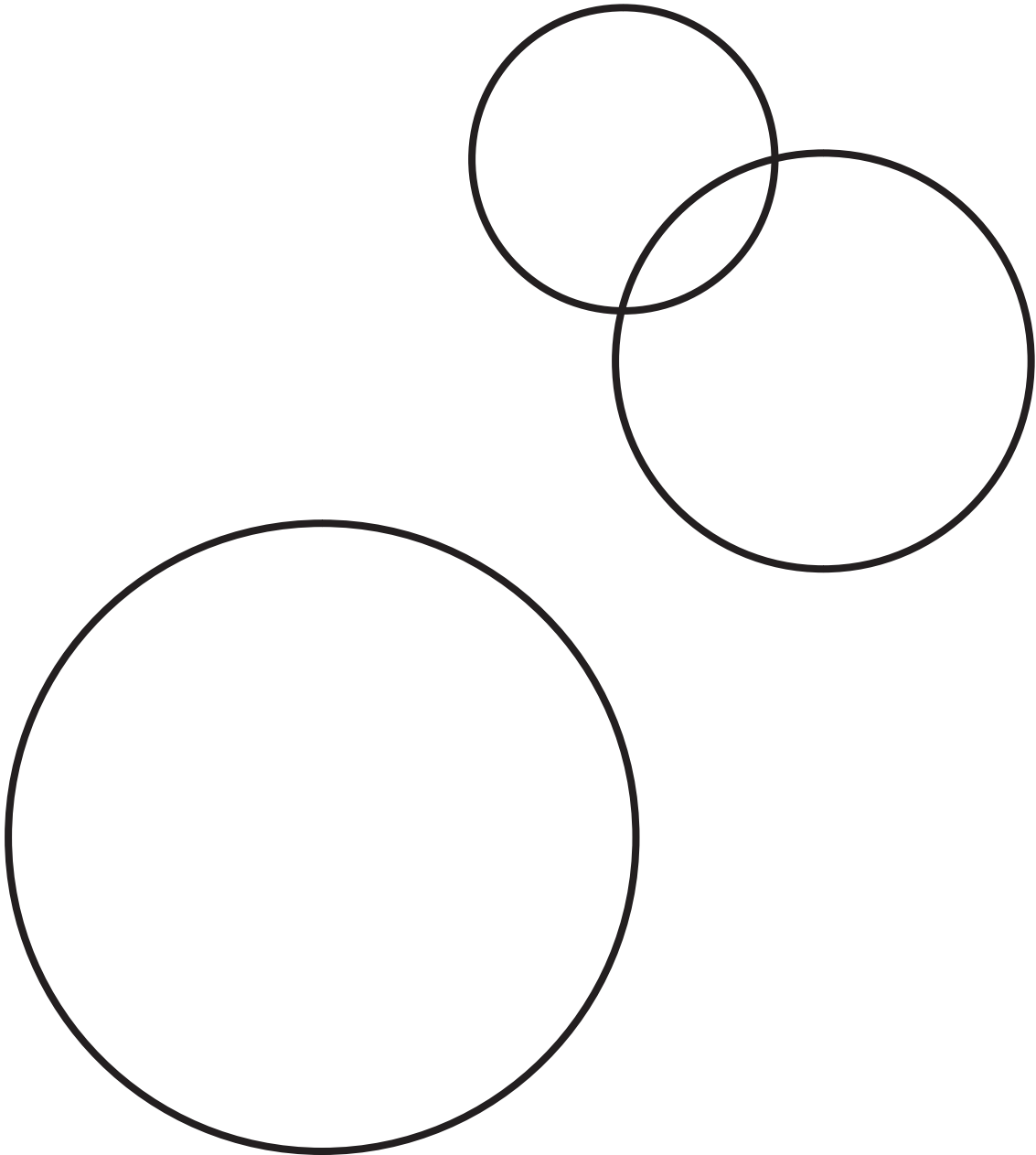
Aunt Ineke (1933–2022)  
(Tile in the kitchen of her cottage)

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1. INTRODUCTION

**“PLEASE LOOK KINDLY UPON ME  
IF I ALLOW MYSELF TO DO WELL,  
EVEN THOUGH YOU YOURSELF MAY  
NOT ALWAYS BE DOING OKAY.  
IF YOU STILL FIND THAT A LITTLE  
DIFFICULT,  
I WILL LEAVE THAT WITH YOU.  
I RESPECT YOU AND YOUR FATE.  
I RESPECT MYSELF  
AND MY FATE.”**

## **1.1 BEING GUIDED BY MY LEGS**

There I was, standing right in the middle of a large, sunlit room. There were about thirty of us in that space, and moments before, we had been instructed to move about the room in silence. If you wanted to stand still, you stood still; if you wanted to walk, you walked. As I quietly wandered around, I felt my legs drawing me toward the literal and figurative center of the space. The room had a large glass skylight through which the sun was shining. The rays of light were spilling right into the center of the room, like a spotlight, while the rest of the room was in the shadows. I felt myself being pulled to that glorious place.

Out of nowhere, a mental process unfolded within me: “Surely I can’t go stand there. Then I’ll be taking the most beautiful place. Who am I to stand there? What will everyone think of me if I do that? If I go stand there, in full view, I’m bound to disappoint others, they’ll be let down, and that’s painful.”

Meanwhile, I continued to float around in the shadows, around the circle of light, that sunny center. The mental process I was going through had left me suffering from substantial heart palpitations—I broke out into a cold sweat, and my throat started to tighten. It was almost unbearable. At the same time, there was a longing and a movement in my body signaling that I needed to get to that place in the sun. With each step that brought me closer to that lovely spot, I faltered a bit, stopping myself and taking another step backward or sideways.

For a while, I kept circling and hesitating until a profound inner force that was greater than me finally propelled me into the center, there in the sun.

For the first few minutes, tension continued coursing through my body. But because of the beautiful light, the

pleasant warmth of the sun, and the fact that my doomsday scenarios turned out to not come true, I found myself landing in that place. I felt a peace wash over me, and a smile from deep within, from my heart, crossed my face. I gradually relaxed and could take a look around me. I noticed the people standing and milling about around me were looking at me very kindly.

Afterward, we reflected on the experience. A few people who had positioned themselves or been walking around me as I stood there in the sun-filled center said that because I had moved into that spot, something had happened within them. They, too, were suddenly able to find their “right” place, or they felt calmer in their bodies. I was astounded and impressed by the fact that my doing nothing, in this case just being quiet and present in my own place, had brought about a positive effect in others.

What I learned then is that when I express something pure, something that wants to manifest through me, it’s actually appropriate to “claim” space. In doing so, I set an example and extend an invitation to others to assume their own place. And it also works the other way around. When I see someone who dares to live their individuality and essence, I’m encouraged to also stand in my place and follow my unique path. What’s remarkable is that when this happens back and forth, there are plenty of spots and space for everyone.

**Every human being has something unique to offer the world and especially to themselves**

The moment you’re in your rightful place, you feel a current of energy in your body in the form of fulfillment, enthusiasm, and joy. You experience that you’re embedded

**WHEN I EXPRESS SOMETHING PURE, SOMETHING THAT WANTS TO MANIFEST THROUGH ME, IT’S ACTUALLY APPROPRIATE TO “CLAIM” SPACE.**

in something greater than yourself. You then feel supported by something that transcends you. It goes beyond your family system of origin. This force directs and guides you in a way that you can hardly, if at all, articulate, but you can sense it if you inhabit your body well and listen to the signals being given to you. It is here that a piece of your soul speaks. As a human being, you have a desire to express your soul in your daily life and share it with those around you. The expression of this and the translation into behavior of what your soul wants is what makes you distinct and unique. You feel the flow of life.

Both what makes me unique and the mission that wants to manifest through me have only taken on a pure form since I have been able to stand in my own place. Your own and unique place is connected with your biological family system of origin. Your individuality and flair emerge when you assume your place through your inner stance. You’re then naturally able to claim space and do so with little effort. Your inner stance toward your biological parents is what determines whether your individuality and flair are available to you. You are 50% your biological father and 50% your biological mother. If you do not allow them to truly be who they are, you will never be satisfied with yourself for a sustained period of time. Therefore, it is necessary as an adult to face your human issues, pain points, and conditioning and let go where necessary. Only then can something new emerge. Otherwise, any patterns will continue to repeat themselves. By undergoing this process, I have become free to live my individuality and my essence, which wants to unfold through me from something greater than myself. Living your essence ensures fulfillment, effortlessness, and gratitude. I celebrate what is available to me, including fulfilling encounters and activities. In doing so, I do not

exclude the less wonderful or what is not (yet) available to me. That, too, is part of my life. And it all involves surrendering to my fate.

### **You have your fate, and the other has theirs**

The art of living your own life so that you express your individuality is to leave with the other what is theirs and bear exclusively what is yours. You have your fate, and the other has theirs. Fate includes all the circumstances that have shaped who you are to this day. It includes both all the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful aspects of your life that you have to and get to live with. You have both a right and a duty to bear your fate. No one else can do that for you because it doesn't belong to anyone else. The last two sentences of the introductory quote of this chapter, "I respect you and your fate" and "I respect myself and my fate," apply in this regard. They confer dignity on both you and the other person. This means that it's right to embrace and celebrate all the beauty of your fate. After all, it would be a sin not to accept all the blessings and goodness available to you. At the same time, this also includes being able to accept the painful.

The quote comes from Bert Hellinger, a German missionary and psychotherapist. He is one of the main spiritual fathers of the systemic perspective and of family and organizational constellations (see 1.4). A constellation is an effective method for gaining insights into the force field in which you find yourself. It's a visualization of the pattern and associated dynamics you face in the undercurrent and of which you are generally unaware and can involve either your personal or your professional life.

What I mean by the systemic perspective is having an eye

for the vast web by and through which all the people and events within a system are connected and that have their effects in the past, present, and future.

Bert Hellinger is no longer alive, but I personally witnessed him at work and learned a great deal from his way of perceiving things and about the dynamics at play in systems. In addition to Bert Hellinger, I've had the opportunity to learn from a multitude of people, encounters, and clients about the laws and human patterns in systems—laws and patterns that are often invisible and not always understood through reason. My valued colleague, dear friend, and owner of the *Instituut voor Systemisch Werk* (Institute for Systemic Work), Elmer Hendrix, encouraged me to follow my path in this field. The outcome of that includes my books, *The Fountain: Find Your Place* (2016), *The Fountain: Make Wise Choices* (2020) and this book, *The Fountain: Celebrate Your Life* (2023).

The impact of these books is turning out to be tremendous. Every day, I receive messages from people of all ages who share that the metaphor of the fountain has brought about something good in their relationship with themselves and their environment, making their world a more beautiful and enjoyable place.

I've been able to achieve this effect only by surrendering to something greater than myself. This involves surrendering both to my family system and to life, which has been propelling me in a certain direction. Is that stressful and exciting? It is absolutely both of those things. Assuming my rightful place is not without its challenges and has involved confronting deep fears. Yet where I am now in life I could never have envisioned or steered toward myself. The flow of life has supported me and led me to my current life, which is more beautiful than I could ever have imagined.



## 1.2 MY MISSION: FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO BE SYSTEMICALLY CLEANER AND LESS BURDENED

A mission is a translation of your essence as a human being into everyday life. Your essence is always connected with something that wants to manifest through you from something bigger than yourself. The essence of what I do in my private and professional life is “letting it flow” so that more loving moments are created, allowing people to feel free(er). Letting it flow can relate to anything, ranging from interactions between yourself, your body, and your mind to relationships between people to bogged-down practical matters. And that has a positive impact on our world. Chapter 7.2 elaborates on the concept of essence.

The fountain has proven to be of great value in helping me spread my essence. I use the concept of the fountain as a metaphor to signify your place in your biological family system of origin and your inseparable connection with all your family members, including their history with the accompanying zeitgeist.

Imagine a beautiful fountain consisting of several tiers of water, all overflowing into each other. Each tier represents a generation. You are always in the child tier below your parents, in order of birth with siblings, half-siblings, miscarriages, and aborted children. You have one unique, indisputable place of your own. It's there that you receive the flow that allows many aspects of your life to unfold with greater ease. Receiving the flow of the fountain is essential to feeling good as a human being.

A fountain that flows smoothly ensures vibrancy and prosperity. When you assume, through your inner stance,

your own unique and rightful place in the fountain and allow everyone and everything in your family system theirs, the fountain flows abundantly. The beneficial pattern of that invisible fountain will then carry over into your daily life.

Receiving the invisible flow of the fountain appears to be a fundamental factor when it comes to feeling fulfilled, alive, and satisfied as a human being. If things are structurally not going well with someone, you can assume that person's inner stance is not aligned with their own place in the fountain. The more people there are who stand securely in their own place in the fountain and allow others their rightful places, the more beautiful the world will become in my opinion, and the more smoothly processes will run. As a result, lost energy caused by “hassles” will decrease.

Because you experience few to no deficits anymore, you have the freedom of movement to allow others to shine and to give them the space they need. You have the “favor factor” when it comes to doing your thing because those around you can see your natural talents and your enthusiasm is contagious. You're better able to connect deeply with others, which also has a positive bearing on your love life. Because you have no hidden agenda, your ego is neither too big nor too small and your connections are therefore pure. You're also less tempted to engage in reactive behavior. You're able to stay true to yourself and nurture yourself in every way, both in your personal and professional life. You live your life instead of being lived. In short: you are not needy.

When you are needy, it means you are not in your rightful place in the fountain. You are failing to receive the invisible flow of the fountain because you've moved into a place that is not yours. Only in your own place do you receive the full

**THE MORE PEOPLE THERE ARE WHO STAND SECURELY IN THEIR OWN PLACE IN THE FOUNTAIN, THE MORE BEAUTIFUL THE WORLD WILL BECOME.**

flow. Because you are not in your own place in the fountain in your inner stance, you build up a deficit. You have then “ascended” in the fountain. You have ended up in a tier at the top of the fountain or somewhere in between, a place where you cannot receive the full flow. Or you have descended *too far* down into the tiers below you, which are for your (grand) children; then you are refusing to be an adult. The resulting neediness is always claimed somewhere—consciously or unconsciously—always from your children and often from your partner, your employer, or the government.

**A deficit in the parents is always felt by the children, even if they are infants**

A child wants nothing more than for their parents to fare well. When the child feels their parents’ neediness, the child starts taking care of the parents and then rises above the parents in the fountain. This taking care of the parents is unsustainable because the child cannot bear or assume what is not theirs. In addition, the child is then likely to pass judgment on their parents. When this child in turn has children, those children feel the neediness of their parent, and so they in turn begin to care for their parent. Or they judge their parent for the behavior shown or their failure to show it. The pattern of ascension then gets constantly repeated. In this way, patterns are passed on from generation to generation.

A child *always* senses, consciously or unconsciously, when their own parent has ascended in the fountain and is therefore needy. This even occurs in infants. And children are incapable of resisting this pull when they’re little. Adults are better able to do so, provided they can bear the guilt and endure it. If you want to take good care of your children,

make sure you assume your rightful place. Doing so allows your children to be free and systemically unburdened so they can live their own lives. Imagine how the energy that thus gets liberated can be harnessed, energy that was first needed to shoulder a systemic burden but is now available for the benefit of valuable goals in life.

The earlier children learn a few essential principles about the systemic laws in a family, the better it is for them and also for the world. Hence, my mission in life: for future generations to be systemically cleaner and less burdened.

I am immensely grateful that the fountain has so many ambassadors. Perhaps you, too, are one of them. Thank you for all you’ve done to spread this mission to those around the world who are willing to receive it.

### 1.3 THE FOUNTAIN: FIND YOUR PLACE

Claiming space to live your essence and allowing others to do the same from a sincere heart makes the world an inviting place. That is where you want to be and where you feel at home. This behavior comes easily when you stand firmly in your own place in the fountain.

My first book, *The Fountain: Find Your Place*, is designed to help you assume your place in the fountain. This is because the patterns coming from wherever you are standing in that invisible fountain carry through into your day-to-day life. When you are stable in your own place in the fountain, those beneficial patterns echo through to your present life. If you drift from your place too often and for too long, those burdensome patterns will persist and haunt you.

Once you’re firmly rooted in your own place, it’s wise to

**IF YOU WANT  
TO TAKE GOOD  
CARE OF YOUR  
CHILDREN,  
MAKE SURE YOU  
ASSUME YOUR  
RIGHTFUL PLACE.**