



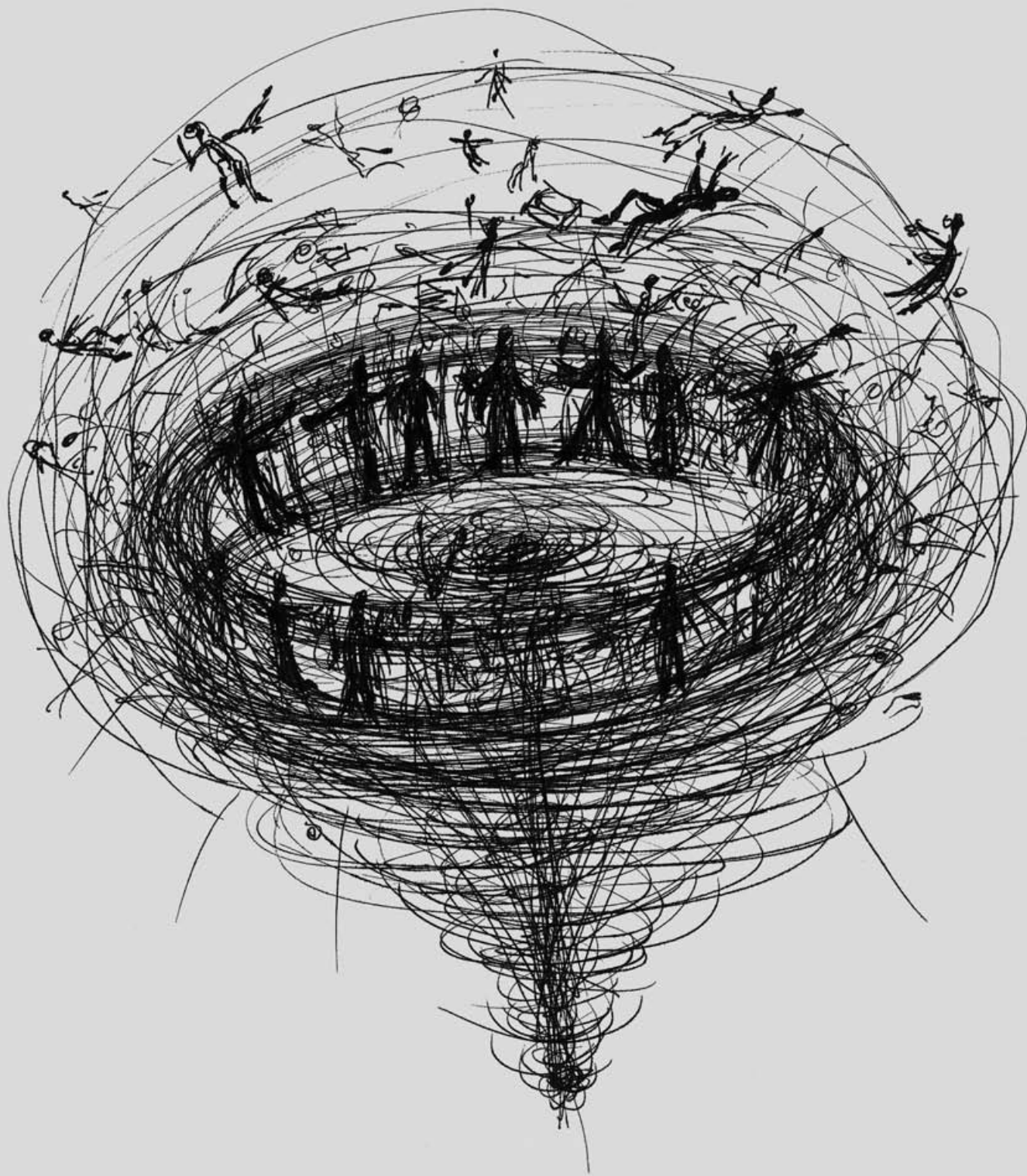
Lekgotla

The art of leadership through dialogue

Willem HJ de Liefde

Revised second edition

Lekgotla



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**From the series the linear
organisation: Race**

by Klaus Elle

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ISBN 978-0-99217-700-3

Also available as an e-book

dPDF ISBN 978-0-9921770-3-4

ePUB ISBN 978-0-9921770-2-7

mobi file ISBN 978-0-9921770-1-0

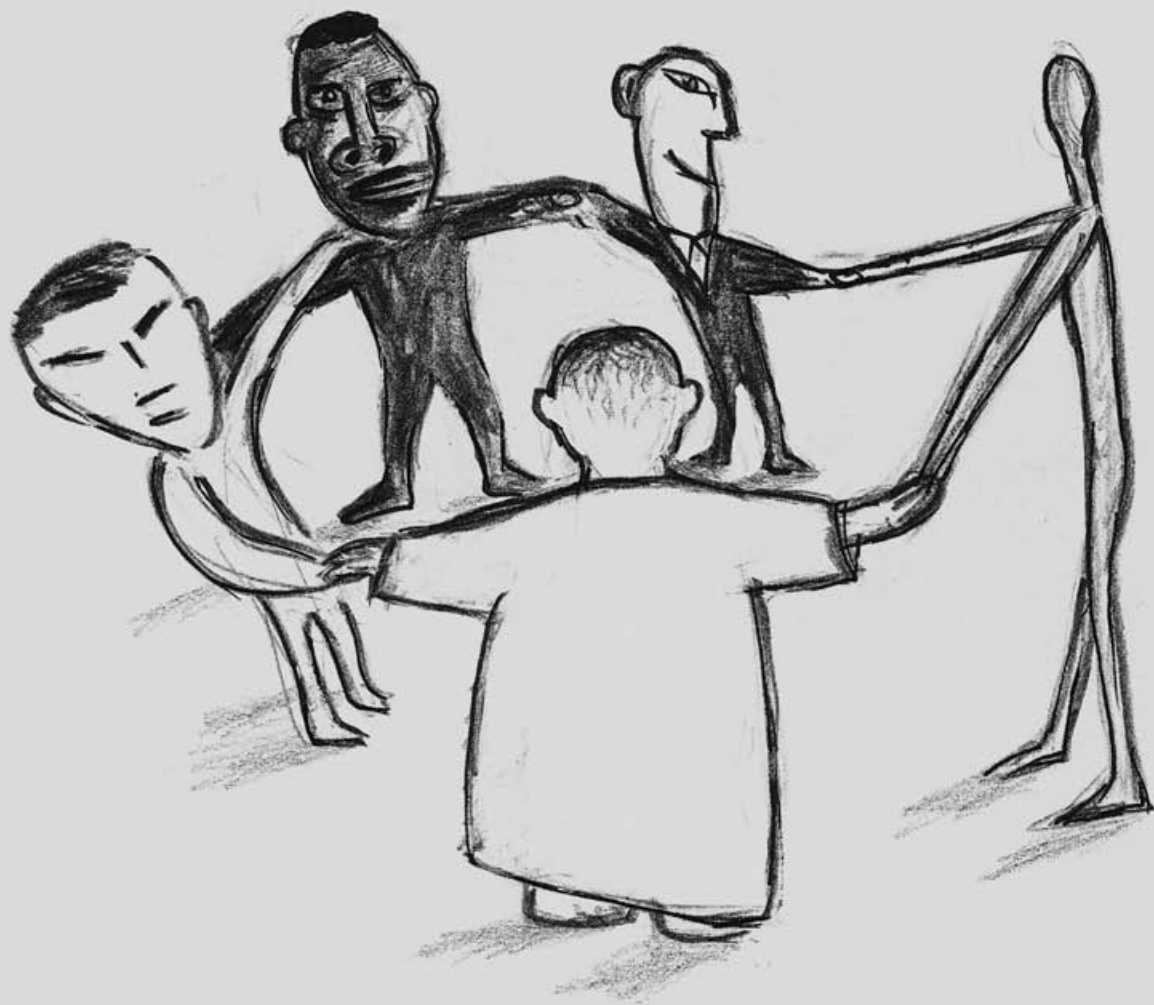
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Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he's been given. But up to now he has not been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wildlife's become extinct, the climate's ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.

Anton Chekhov, 1897

Let us choose to unite the power of markets with the authority of universal ideals. Let us choose to reconcile the creative forces of private entrepreneurship with the needs of the disadvantaged and the requirements of future generations.

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Ultimately the deepest desire of every entrepreneur and every person is to create from a love of life and to advance the wholeness of the world and make it visible.

Dr P Delahay , philosopher , astrologist



Common Ground

by Klaus Elle

Foreword

by Dr JJ Boonstra and Dr Maki Mandela

As a professor I read many books about organisational change, leadership, culture and decision-making. Much of what I have read has been written before. And books on current themes such as giving meaning, inspiration and creativity don't always enthral me. They are often not very practical or so practical that they overlook the complex reality confronted by those in management positions.

Occasionally I encounter a book that inspires, connects themes and presents arresting points of view. This is one of those remarkable books in which an abundance of well-considered practical experience leads to new insights. Alongside all the existing abstract books on inspiration, giving meaning and communication, this book presents the themes in a practical and well-considered manner. In this book it is clear how renewal and movement in organisations takes shape through the exchange of experiences, telling stories, giving meaning, creativity and forming communities.

This book is also practically relevant because of its direct applicability. But it is also of scholarly interest because it connects two different ways of thinking. Social constructionists say that people in dialogue with one another give form and meaning to the world, which in this book is linked to the thinking behind systems theory. The latter states that reality is determined by many changing, often interdependent variables whose influence is unpredictable. It's precisely the combination of knowledge, know-how and art that makes Willem de Liefde's book exciting.

As a manager in a centre of learning, this book also inspired me to consider my own style of leadership. Willem de Liefde pleads for leadership based on respect, trust, daring, humanity and dignity. These are strong pillars on which an organisation can build a community in which there is room for creativity, renewal and social involvement.

Tribal management also presents an unusual view of the diversity of cultures and counter-balances cultural relativism. It demonstrates how the cultural values and practices of African tribes can be an inspiring and enriching way of examining problems, and of approaching them with respect. In de Liefde's view, communication is not a "management tool" but a dialogue according to the principles of the *lekgotla* – meetings of members of traditional African tribes when existential questions arise in the community.

Inspired by the visual arts, de Liefde sketches a dynamic image of the life cycle of organisations undergoing renewal. Life cycle models in standard management literature assume that only the strongest survive in a competitive world, or that in the life of an organisation, crises arise that have to be overcome. Based on experiences in art and culture, this book contains a vision of a life cycle based on giving meaning, energy and movement. It is an innovative approach for managers who feel they are able to implement processes of transformation on the basis of dialogue and respect.

You will find this a surprising and inspiring book in which the unusual combination of management, art, science and philosophy will be a source of inspiration for leaders, artists and scholars.

*Dr JJ Boonstra, Professor in Management of Change in Organisations,
University of Amsterdam, Rector Sioo, Inter-university Centre for
Organisation, Change and Professionalisation*

This book is a meeting of souls from Africa and Europe – in an attempt to find common ground. It is written for family, friends, colleagues known and unknown, for those who find themselves at the crossroads of their lives, or their careers, and for those who are searching and yearning for a source of change. It is for those who are willing to dig deeper, to look beyond the surface of things. It is an invitation to all to learn from a “*lekgotla*” as a continuing journey into the future, one driven by caring and commitment to common ground.

Dr Maki Mandela is an anthropologist in Johannesburg

The endless call



From the creator's desk



I began my career as a sailor. The experiences I gained at sea laid the foundation for my later work as a manager. At sea I experienced the importance of team spirit, mutual trust, respect and natural authority. I know the conditions under which energy is released and decisions are taken quickly. Once ashore I was amazed to discover that something that was self-evident on board ship was more the exception than the rule in the corporate world.

I discovered that I achieved the best results when my actions were based on experience and intuition. This made me a “reflective practitioner”. When I facilitated transformation processes my aim was always to involve and empower people under the motto “united we stand”.

A planned restructuring within a subsidiary of a multinational brought me to South Africa. There I encountered South African tribal culture and discovered that I had often intuitively acted according to this ancient tradition. This encouraged me to investigate the matter further.

This book is the direct result of a remarkable meeting I had with Lemmy Khama, a young architect from Botswana. Our conversation turned to the value of spiritual land and we agreed that if you were to build on such land, the building should enhance the spiritual value of the environment. He drew my attention to a design in which the main characteristic was minimalist architecture that incorporated a *kgotla* – a central meeting place. This aroused my interest even more and he began



The Creator

by Klaus Elle

Small and large-scale lekgotla meetings took place in South Africa, Botswana, The Netherlands and Germany

to share traditional values with me, in which the *lekgotla* – the meeting – is synonymous with dialogue.

Subsequently, small and large-scale *lekgotla* meetings took place, not only in South Africa, but also in Botswana, The Netherlands and Germany. Many ideas, drawings, facts and stories played a role in these meetings and were contributing factors in creating this book. I'm thinking in particular of the contributions of Tutu Ché, Sherin and Jansje. In the dialogues, Jansje represented the Inner Truth.

The artists Klaus Elle and Jan Montyn did the illustrations for the book. Klaus Elle was born and bred in East Germany and later emigrated to the West. He knows what dictatorship is and understands the rules of

democracy. For him, “art is the map of his soul”. He is a photographer, graphic artist, builder of philosophical models and visual moderator. He has learnt to recognise unconscious aspects of himself, to accept them and to connect them to his consciousness.

Jan Montyn was born in Oude Water in The Netherlands. He's an internationally renowned artist who works in The Netherlands, Thailand and France. He regularly works as a volunteer for Doctors Without Borders. He's a person who has truly lived. In 1993, at the request of the creator, Jan Montyn developed the nine etchings for the universal life cycle.

Dumani Mandela, grandson of Nelson Mandela, also made a contribution. While growing up he

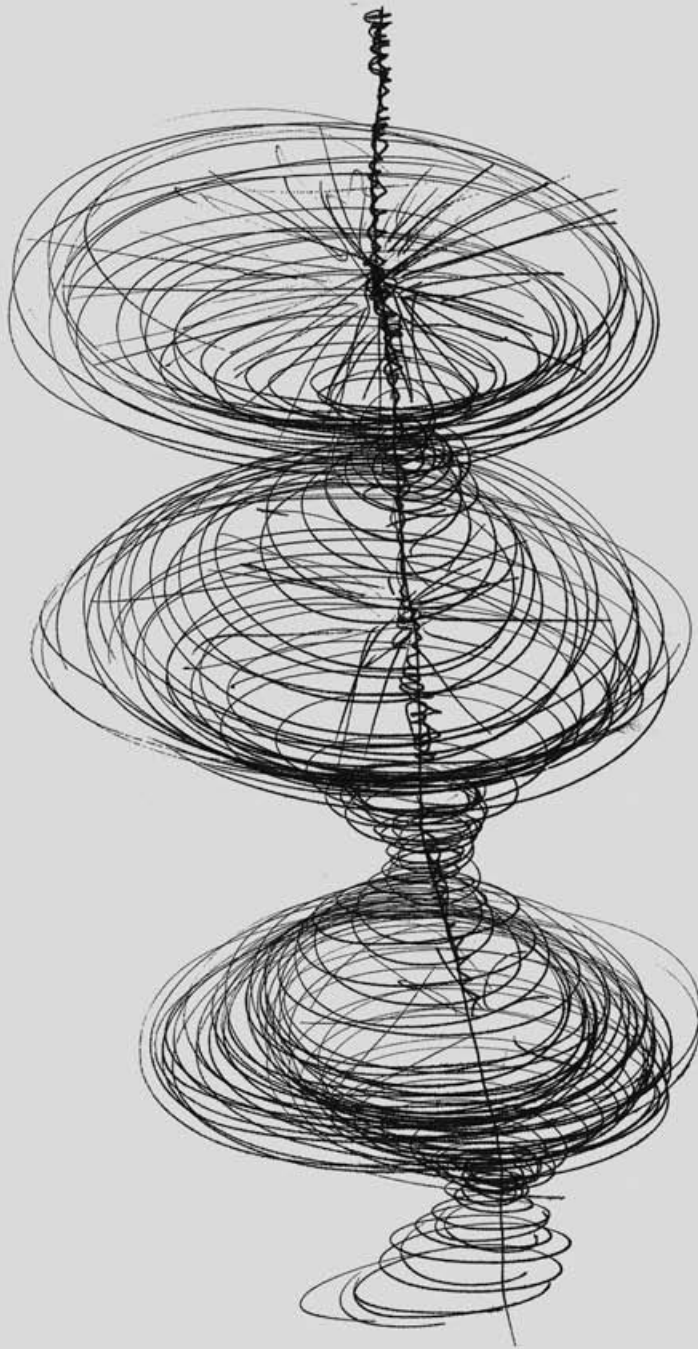
This book marks the beginning of a new relationship between management, science, art and philosophy

drew warmth from the fire of traditional myths – the collective knowledge of the continent runs in his veins. When he was still young he made the transition to the American way of life. His contribution is directed at the cross-flow of old and new knowledge. The title of one of his books, *Life is too short to drink bad coffee*, expresses an attitude to life I happily embrace as a guiding principle.

Godfried den Boer played the role of critical sounding board in the development of this book. His valuable additions and contributions are based on his experience as a consultant on the cutting edge of management development and organisational renewal. He lives and works in Netersel in The Netherlands.

This book marks the beginning of a new relationship between management, science, art and philosophy. It makes no claim to present the African approach, should such a thing exist on this enormous continent. It should be seen as a reflection on personal experiences gained in Botswana and South Africa applied to business questions of our time. This is what I have concerned myself with during my working life.

New insight into the leadership trinity has emerged: the rainmaker, the hunter and the messenger. The messenger replaces the creator. Messengers are fundamental to vital organisations. They are the carriers of inner truth and collective wisdom.



The Unknown – Dialogue/Us

The Unexpected – Us

Postmodern time – Ratio/Ego

Industrial Revolution – Ratio
(modern time)

Renaissance – Thought

Tribal – Us/Dialogue

For this new edition, a special thanks goes to Martijn de Liefde, an unconditional believer in the contents of this book. He has brought the message to the world through his unlimited passion and enthusiasm. Jan Montyn, accepting my 1993 commission, created 27 works of art. Nine are published in this book, representing identity and

meaning, and the collective. Martijn has further developed and used the 18 images not included here.

The life cycle has been used in business environments for more than 15 years and has impressed numerous people through its accurate diagnoses.

I trust this book will be of use to many in their creative work and believe that the tribal-management philosophy and art will make a valuable contribution to decision-making processes. In particular, I hope that this book will be a source of inspiration to many in management positions.

The creator, WHJ de Liefde, Dainfern, South Africa





About the author:

Willem HJ de Liefde was born in 1941 in Coevorden. His working life began as a helmsman in the merchant marine with Royal Rotterdam Lloyd. He ended his naval career as an officer in the Dutch Royal Navy. Thereafter he studied economics and held several management positions and directorships in Europe, the United States and Africa, working for multinationals such as Ericsson, Xerox, Rockwool and Draeger. His field of expertise is managing transformation, inspiring employees and team-building.

"The author has derived contemporary business theory from the tradition of the *Lekgotla* – the meeting-place, the age-old tradition of communication, which has helped in the healing and transformation process in South Africa."

Helene Smuts

"This book will help those who find themselves at the crossroads of their lives, careers and who are searching and yearning for a source of change."

Dr Maki Mandela

"You will find this a surprising and inspiring book in which the unusual combination of management, art, science and philosophy will be a source of inspiration for leaders, artists and scholars."

Professor JJ Boonstra

"Dares to be different."

Jan Eversteijn

Lekgotla

LEKGOTLA: n.

S.African: a strategy planning

meeting, especially one convened

by government or the executive committee of an

organisation. **ORIGIN** Sesotho, 'assembly, council'.

(South African Concise Oxford Dictionary)



Lekgotla is a Sesotho word for 'meeting circle or assembly'. This book uses southern African principles of tribal management to transform traditional western organisations.

Lekgotla champions the idea of the company as a tribe and managing it as such, it means that all employees are included in promoting the organisation as a community, and ensures that each person gets the chance to voice his or her opinions at every stage. The end result is a company culture in which all members subordinate their individual goals and aims to the wider interests of the group so they can survive successfully as a unit.

Lekgotla explores the power of stories and the power of art as a source of inspiration for business and corporations. It investigates too the structure and dynamics of the *lekgotla* meeting, the roles that the elders play, the different types of leaders, and the dilemma of the contemporary manager.

This is an important book which comes at a challenging time for business both here in South Africa and throughout the world.

Lekgotla contains illustrations by the German artist Klaus Elle and nine etchings by the Dutch artist Jan Montyn, which represent the dynamic of change within organisations. This series of etchings represents the Universal Life Cycle.

ISBN 978-0-9921770-0-3



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