

## life purpose in the academy: faculty soul

don thompson & cindy miller-perrin

### book proposal

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#### why do we need this book?

the life of a faculty member is often solitary, singular, and independent. as a result, the interior life of the faculty member and therefore of the academy itself is not well understood. faculty members are a kind of self-employed and self-perpetuating guild, focusing on the life of the mind.<sup>1</sup> theirs is a life of dedicated to research, to the office, the laboratory, the classroom, and students - where they close the door and keep the public out. it is a private world.<sup>2</sup> but faculty members, if asked, often want to tell us how they think, how they became academics, and how their lives contribute to a sense of life purpose. in fact, they are the only ones who can tell these stories. they alone, like a royal priesthood, charged with maintaining the academy, can ultimately tell us their own life purposes and, therefore, the purposes that drive the academy itself. it is time to look inside these faculty lives so that we may understand their culture, what drives it, and what end it drives toward. this book opens the classroom door, the office door, and the department door in order to look inside and see inside the faculty soul, letting us connect with them and with a central part of every culture – the academic world.

this is not a unique work – reserved only for the academy. the lessons about life purpose spoken here are universals. each of us feels some disconnectedness from our colleagues at work because of roles we are to play. this book fills a need we all have for need honesty and vulnerability that allow us to connect with each other on a deeper, soul level. we all need to know that our journeys, our quests, tie to those of our co-workers and colleagues. we will all benefit from this exchange of ideas. this is an account of some two hundred private lives made a bit more public. this is a story by faculty about faculty. come inside.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley fish and robert Putnam have more to say about this life – focusing on the interior – a kind of academic bowling alone lifestyle – whose charge is to examine issues critically and academically and teach others to do the same. **underlying themes** - why enter the academy? chapters by questions how did I get here? who are my mentors? what has been difficult? why am I here? factors/variables -mentors, faith turning points gender def. of god's role what does it take? why this particular discipline for me? why am I staying? metaphor, granularity of experience, called to be, called to do, stepping stones, labyrinth, our calling chooses us, buechner, maslow, cascading & networking calling, circle of trust, matthew crawford

<sup>2</sup> see sq – spiritual intelligence book on self-awareness – p. 285 – we don't spend enough time learning inwardly. in fact this can be and should be the push for spirituality anyway – we must learn about the interior, else we know nothing!

**what this book is about**

this book is about the interior lives of college and university faculty members, based on their autobiographical writing. the book uses excerpts from over two hundred essays to explore the life purpose journey of faculty so that faculty and students alike can understand faculty and the life of the academy.

**audience**

the audience for this work is the collection of all college and university faculty as well as all current and former college and university students. faculty are like professional students. accordingly, this book will be beneficial to all of us, for we all are or have been students and know too little about our teachers, our academic mentors.

**what distinguishes it from other books currently available on the subject**

this is a portrait gallery of the academy. our work draws from autobiographical essays of over two hundred college and university faculty, including their own words to describe the process of becoming a faculty member and living in the academy. although each portrait is different, there are similar facial features, so that this work helps the reader understand the common themes present in entering and staying in the academy, from the perspective of those who make up the academy – its faculty. this is not a success story or how to manual on becoming a professor. instead, this is an account of the life journeys of faculty members, in their own words.

**book length – 150 pp.****our qualifications are for writing the book**

we have data. this book is the fruit of collecting and analyzing 200 essays by faculty about their life purpose – ranging from new pre-tenure to full professor. we ourselves are faculty, whose combined time in the professoriate exceeds 45 years. we are researchers who have built the data set, analyzed it, published part of our work, and presented our findings across the country and conducted workshops with faculty on life purpose.

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<sup>3</sup>pay your dues by getting your ph.d. publish, teach, advise, stay current in your field, represent your discipline and the university. never lose face as an academic. never admit you don't know. know your field inside and out. publish or perish. be fiercely untrusting of administrators. be private. faculty culture – academic freedom and autonomy and skepticism – discipline based – two levels of isolation, we often interact with other colleagues from our club and with our own students – but there are two levels of isolation – the separation of the academy from the rest of the world; the separation of one discipline from another.

<sup>4</sup> describe the process and the reading list and the essay prompts and the process of sharing. we bring faculty together we defragment the fragmented. describe what we did – read, think, write, discuss, know, discern and move forward, academic group encounter. purpose is a universal desire – meaning is what we all seek – even faculty, even academics – we get it in publication and in students/disciples . the epistemology of life purpose definition – not focus on this too much ... discernment – key part – absolutely central part – this is the journey, the sense of knowing that we are doing the right thing – how we get inspired, affirmed, rewarded, ...

<sup>5</sup> this is the first installment of meat from the essays members – their guides and turning points and ... what they tell us, tell you – the +, cascading calls – academic as person choose 5 great great essays to draw from marshall, Thomas, colburn, ...

<sup>6</sup> the – and what to do about it (the unnamed ones who flunk out or never finish) sacrifices we make study and intellectual stress and deep walking are under the sea and not seen. our life is solitary and singular – academic as challenge – what happens when things don't seem to fit choose 5 great essays to draw from schaffer, cvs, ...

<sup>7</sup> universals for all of us who work in solos, who live one life and work another. what IS the purpose of being an academic – what is the academic call? what is it like living this out? rules are unspoken and so are the lives that play by these rules. advance the discipline – obey the truth (parker palmer), disciple, mentor, Stanley fish truth is the center essay – we are obedient to the truth – now that we have read these accounts, what does it mean to be an “academic”? cascades and discipling and disciplines – few faculty are generalists, loving EVERY discipline –(james Thomas) so we shouldn't expect students to be either. we all have our favorites, our loves, our preferences.

<sup>8</sup> – what is it like to be mentored? we are the other part of the academy. without us, no academy. (truth is the center writing!) – what do I want from the academy. what am I giving?

## 8. bowling together<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> what to do with all of this – conclusion, to know as we are known – parker palmer