

Preface

The book which you are about to read represents, at one level, the philosophy underpinning my view on life, and how best to live it. Yet it is more than a philosophy of life, it is a basis for taking control of one's circumstances, a recipe for making deep and constructive changes to one's attitudes and beliefs, and a guidebook for a journey of personal transformation and growth. It is my sincere hope that this book helps each reader to profoundly broaden their experience of what it is to be alive and conscious, and to embrace the beauty, grace and strength within themselves.

This treatise is the result of my own searches and experiences in my life to date, but the wisdom and philosophy it espouses is as ancient as the hills. I believe that all sincere seekers have the blessing and guidance of spiritual contacts, whether they are aware of it or not, whose task it is to help and guide in whatever way they can, and by whatever means they may. I thank my own contacts for their part in inspiring and guiding me, and dedicate this work to them. However, where what follows falls short of the Truth that I have sought to express, it is my responsibility.

The term "The Great Work" refers to the Alchemical and Hermetic tradition, which has its roots in ancient Egypt, and has carried on in a more or less unbroken tradition to this day. It is used to refer to the quest to transmute base metal into gold, as well as the quest to transmute human life into an expression of inherent Divinity. It is the second meaning that I intend for this treatise.

While it is not necessary to have any acquaintance with Alchemy, spiritual or practical, to make full use of this book, readers who do have such an acquaintance will note that my major themes echo those of the Alchemical tradition. However I have de-emphasised the dualistic legacy of the Gnostic tradition, which tends to oppose the world of matter with

the world of pure spirit, believing instead that matter and spirit are locked in a mutually supporting cosmic embrace. I have also attempted to make my meaning as plain as I can, and to give clear and practical instructions for a process of self transformation.

This treatise, consists, in the main, of discussions on certain topics and issues which I consider essential philosophy for aspirants to the Great Work. It is my hope that these discussions will help you to establish beneficial mental frameworks and helpful attitudes with regard to the Great Work, and lead to healthier ways of seeing yourself and life. I hope that you find it both interesting and inspiring, and that it assists you in broadening your mental horizons. However these discussions must be accompanied by a rich contemplative dimension to one's life in order to assume their full import and significance.

To this end, I have taken the liberty of providing some suggested journal and contemplative exercises at the end of each chapter. In regard to these exercises, I would like to make three important points. Firstly, many readers will already have a focus for their inner life, whether they follow a particular tradition of inner development or not. The exercises I suggest may not necessarily gel with the approach taken and momentum established in their own inner life. Such readers may wish to adapt the suggestions or to work directly with the concepts in the text, in a way suggested by their own experience.

Secondly, it is not as simple as doing a couple of guided meditations, and becoming transformed, though of course it might be! Awareness is something that must be practised at all times. It is something that grows. Changes in outlook and self perception happen, firstly by being aware of the possibility, secondly, by having the intention to effect the change, and thirdly, cultivating the self awareness to notice the changes within one's self. Now by reading this treatise, you are becoming aware of these possibilities. It is up to you, however, to establish the intention to realise the possibilities I am raising. If what I say resonates with you, then establishing that intention will be easy. Being aware of the changes that are taking place in oneself is accomplished through self observation. A diary may be a useful tool for this, but is not necessary for the changes to take place. How each person works with awareness, intention, and self observation is a personal matter, but these principles should fit into any meditational or spiritual framework.

A third important point is that each exercise should begin with a blessing, and end with a gesture of gratitude for the insights and expe-

riences gained. To remind you of this important detail, each exercise begins with the words, “Take three deep and steady breaths, and begin by saying out loud or in your imagination “May this exercise be blessed by [insert saint, deity, divine manifestation of your choice], for the highest good of all.” Each exercise also finishes with words such as “Conclude the exercise by giving thanks.” You can give thanks to the saint deity or divine manifestation that blessed the exercise, or if you like, spend a few moments in a state of gratitude to the great mystery of life, or be grateful in whatever way and to whoever seems appropriate to you.

Whether you explore the exercises I suggest or not, I believe that it is beneficial to cultivate a contemplative dimension to oneself, to provide an experiential counterweight to philosophical discussion. Whether one works with the suggestions I provide, or meditations or visualisations from their own particular spiritual path or personal creativity, I would suggest setting aside a regular time each day to cultivate this aspect. I believe that this is an essential part of establishing the inner framework necessary for the conduct of the Great Work. One way of working with the book is to read it through, from beginning to end, and then go back to each chapter, re-reading and doing the exercises I suggest, or those suggested to you by the chapter, over a period of time, perhaps a week or a month. In this way, I think you will find that certain changes in outlook will have a chance to take hold.

If you are happy with your self, your life, and your relationship to it, then this is not the book for you. However if you feel unsatisfied and miserable at times and don't really know why, and are distressed by our hyper materialistic society with its individualistic focus, then read on. I hope you may find here some answers to your distress, and chart a course through your own life towards a deep and abiding fulfilment.

Blessed Be,
Robyn Wood.

