

# The profound joy of manifestation. Study, read, and walk your way to inspiration (Ankh-Hermes, 2004)

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## Manifestation

The word manifestation is derived from the Latin '*manifestare*', which means: to reveal, to bring to light. Firstly, the term refers to a vision, intention or inspiration seeking to be disclosed. Secondly, it denotes the process of manifestation itself. What role does manifestation play in our own lives, do we experience it consciously, do we exude the inner change it brings? Every manifestation process begins with a process of realization.

I remember arriving at Assisi in Italy in a state of exhaustion. I had been going through a difficult period in both my personal and professional life, and felt this place of pilgrimage would be the ideal spot to find some much-needed rest. On my first night, I visited the grave of the Holy Saint Francis. I made a tour of the tomb, and sat down to meditate. To my surprise, my head merely resounded with the words: *la gioia, la gioia, the joy, the joy*. No part of me felt the least bit joyous at that moment, and I didn't believe anything could change my condition. Nevertheless, my inner voice was telling me that the state of deep joy lay within my reach. I realised I had been holding far too rigid an attitude towards failure and success, and had been unable to rise above the disappointments and victories of everyday life. I realised I would have to grow and make sacrifices if I wished to continue along the path of creative development. I pledged that no matter what happened, I would try to keep sight of the essence of my learning experiences, and stay focused on my positive basic attitude.

In Assisi, I realised once again that for deep inner joy to come to fruition, we must - through all the turmoil - rediscover the source of inspiration in our lives, and dare to follow its call. This book offers a set of new tools for meaningful reflection on our lives and works. It also helps us use insight and experience to find new forms of manifestation and cooperation. The essence of this process could be summed up as 'joy through conscious action'. This is a skill that requires practice. Profound joy arises from self-reflection, consciousness of one's inner workings and the desire to use this insight for the greater good, each in our own unique way. In the words of my teacher Swami Muktananda: *True knowledge is not dry, it releases bliss. If it does not release bliss, it is not knowledge.*

A recent study showed that three quarters of all Dutch workers dislike their jobs, and are afraid to discuss this with their superiors. It is high time we develop a new set of values that will lead to an optimally inspired way of living and greater job satisfaction.

Ultimately, this book aims to help its readers find profound joy in each of their manifestations, by exploring the various aspects of inspiration. It is the joy of those that are at one with themselves, and - as a result - the living world around them. This joy is not dependant on prosperity or adversity, abundance or poverty. It is the joy

created by an individual in harmony with his or her soul, and the rhythm of nature. Profound joy has the innate capacity to make us humble and uncomplicated. A bird surrenders itself to the first daylight and starts to sing. It does not think, it simply merges with the moment of daybreak.

## **An introduction to the soul of the book**

### ***The right to inspiration***

This book goes straight to the heart of the profound joy of manifestation. Experiencing it is our birthright. All too often, I come across people who take their lives and work so seriously that they simply cannot enjoy either. They are under enormous pressure to perform and comply with all sorts of external demands. Entangled in fixed patterns and compulsive behaviours, their minds, hearts and bodies become detached from one another. Although they feel a deep inner need for inspiration, they have no idea where to find its source. Getting to know one's own source of inspiration and using it as a basis for decisions is perfectly natural, but our daily lives do not seem to demand that we develop this capacity. It is much more important to be consistent and loyal company employees, or loyal partners in a family. Many of these relationships, however, are based on fear.

As human beings, we have a birthright to education, employment and healing as a means of discovering and fulfilling our potential and destination. We should all have the right to experiment with all sources of our inspiration, in order to find profound joy in our manifestations. We are unfamiliar with the various aspects of inspiration, such as inner reflection, concentration, passion, profound wisdom and insight, a mental attitude based on a sense of oneness and interconnectedness, joy, and the activation of universal creative energy in our bodies. Often, too, we are unaware that true inspiration requires a balanced rhythm of self-reflection and action, and a process of maturation that must include stages of chaos, growth, fruition and sacrifice.

### ***Creating beyond the ego***

The aspects of inspiration I have mentioned above are the inner gemstones we can use to transcend the limitations of a self-oriented attitude. In a 2001 speech in Amsterdam, Nelson Mandela spoke of the need to rise above this attitude of the ego. In his view, the best remedy for our problems is insight and cooperation. Mandela sees it as vital that we realise we are the captains of our own soul, the masters of our fate. This means we are responsible for our own behaviour. *We are*, so to speak, our own process of evolution. This means we are responsible for our own inner happiness.

With regard to the much-needed cooperation Mandela referred to: we must stop trying to distinguish ourselves from one another and have the courage to set aside our egos. Only then can we truly make wise decisions on the issues that determine our lives and happiness. Such cooperation could form the basis for true peace and unity in what is becoming a globally conscious society.

The ingredients: a mental attitude based on interconnectedness, art and daily practice

How can we re-establish contact with our inner soul and learn to experience joy in our daily activities? I do so by practicing the mental attitude of Saint Francis of Assisi, the arts and practical exercises in everyday life.

### ***The mysticism of Saint Francis of Assisi as a source of true spiritual joy and insight***

Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) was a man whose spirit had not been split by duality or degenerated through superficiality. He was at one with the entire living world and experienced this as a profound source of joy. Unlike other mystics of his age, he did not choose to retreat as a hermit or monk, instead deciding to live a selfless life amongst his fellow men. Francis was a man of nature, and it was there that he wandered and wrote his ode to all creatures; the Canticum of Brother Sun. The work's simplicity lends it a great sense of clarity. His life and love for all manifestations still resonate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Francis' tomb is a powerful source of light that lent me insight into my true nature and underlying inspirations.
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### ***Francis' grave as a source of inspiration and interconnected thought***

In order to delve deeper into each of the aspects of inspiration, I decided to draw an overall picture. I had planned to design a circle within which the reader could explore his or her own internal and external creative powers.

As I wrote, I became aware that such an exploratory tour already existed in the real world. Not only in the hearts and consciousness of each human being, but in the form of a holy site where each of these forces meet. I am referring to the burial site of Saint Francis of Assisi. Francis' tomb is a universal symbol of the power of manifestation and light. It is a place of the heart where we can explore the most profound aspects of our inspiration. It is a place of deep reconciliation, healing and the joy of living. Here, people of all ages, religious beliefs and backgrounds come to experience a deeper contact with their souls. It is a quiet place where those who listen can hear the lively language of the heart. Those who visit here can take example by the life of a holy man who gave up his individuality so that he could embrace all people and life-forms.

In addition to being the burial site of Saint Francis of Assisi, the tomb is also the last resting place of a number of deeply inspired souls that stood at his side during life. Together with Francis, they make up the sum total of powerful manifestation and love. These are not just historic figures, they are the active energies inside each of us. Together, these energies make up an active force field from which we can derive new inspiration.

The tomb, then, offers us - both literally and figuratively - a universal model that can help lead us toward deeper inspiration and profound joy in our manifestations. Rather than explore inspiration from the perspective of any one religious belief or spiritual teaching, I have chosen to go straight to its source.

### ***The role of the arts***

Selfless creation requires a mature relationship with the ego. The ego, which I view as man's self-oriented attitude, is the product of our thoughts, beliefs, patterns and fears. We can only widen our view of our manifestations by subjugating the ego to the inner source, the soul.

I believe we can acquire the spiritual, inspired attitude to life through the works and ideas of the artist.

This spiritual attitude can be found in all the great artists. I discuss several of them in this book, including Franz Marc, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Joseph Beuys. They widen the concept of art to include an attitude to life itself, in which each individual is called upon to create in accordance with his or her soul. They offer us courage, vision and a practical approach towards soul creation.

In order to enliven the words and music with images, I have illustrated the book liberally with ink drawings. I use Chinese ink and Chinese brushes on watercolour and rice paper. The ink drawings' dimensions range from 20x30 cm to 40x50 cm. I often work in small series.

I refer to the book's illustrations as energy drawings. These drawings, created using the inner sense organ, represent frequencies or vibrations, voices, messages, sounds and atmospheres I perceive in nature, in the human soul and the cosmos. Though they are often impossible to see or hear, they have an enormous influence on our well-being and daily lives. Rather than mystify, the drawings are intended to shed light. My works are greatly inspired by a quote by Sufi mystic Hazrat Inayat Khan:

There is nothing on this earth without a voice. Each object, each being is continually calling out its nature, its character and its secret. The more receptive our inner sense organ is, the more it will be able to hear the voice of all that is around us.

### **Daily practice**

Cultivating the soul and experiencing profound joy in our daily activities demands daily practice. A book on manifestation should help the reader achieve manifestation, which is why I have included a great many exercises. They can be divided into three categories: reading, learning and walking exercises. The reading exercises are made up of texts and background information that can help us deepen the power of our manifestation. The learning exercises are varied in terms of content and duration. They consist of consciousness exercises, musical and listening exercises and various creative exercises. I have strived to balance exercises for both our silent and

active forces. Finally, Chapter 6 contains a number of walking exercises. The reader can use a number of meditative walks in Umbria, the green heart of Italy and the original home of Francis to further deepen his or her inspiration.

I would recommend that the reader take the time to explore all aspects of the book. The exercises are intended to awaken and deepen inspiration. They offer a means of dealing with challenges.

## **Structure**

I describe the profound joy of manifestation over the course of six chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on fundamental questions and provides a series of exercises intended to lead to profound joy in our manifestations; Chapter 2 consists of transformation exercises to help us create optimally and transcend our egos and souls; Chapter 3 deals with the silent forces behind our manifestations, such as inner listening and awareness, concentration and sensitivity to intuition; Chapter 4 focuses on love for our potential creative force. Here, I have included quotes from various students of the course. In Chapter 5, I link the new vision on manifestation with various contemporary societal issues, regarding work, communication and education; in Chapter 6, I take the reader on a journey through Assisi and its environs, during which he or she will be able to experience inspiration in all its forms.