

# **Herbert Witzenmann –The 12 Virtues Contemplations**

## **Extracts from the preface:**

The year is an archetype of becoming and declining. Moreover, since the end is followed by a new beginning, for perception, it forms as circle....

The sun is the leader of this heavenly round and is the awakener and life-giver of all earthly things whose destiny is perpetual transformation....

There are twelve stages of development in which the soul can educate herself and to which she must impel herself. Hence they are not natural tendencies but Virtues. In this sense the human being may experience one's own soul as a bud which awaits unfolding. The human soul, of course, even before her self-knowledge and self-transformation, is graced with an abundance of potentialities, but these become stunted or even change into their opposite when the treasure which lies hidden in the soul is not nurtured and brought to light. For this the soul requires the guidance and direction of her own spirit. She senses then her spirit as the inner sun which in 'the year of the soul', awakens her to herself, and allows her to follow her journey through the constellations of the ideal.

If this occurs, then a similar unfolding arises in the soul as in nature, and also a dying off and falling away of the unpurified similar to the falling of the leaves.... For the human spirit, also, attains to the radiation of its light and its warmth only when, in dialogue with the soul, it ever better recognises its task. The path of metamorphosis, which the soul, under the direction of the spirit, traverses in a lawful sequence (even when inner practice demands repetition), does not return, however, to its beginning. Rather the soul renders unto herself, ever more vital and perfect, the ideals of the Virtues, which the spirit reveals to her, and to which she is summoned from within. She describes in her development, not a circular returning, but an ascending spiral.....

The following contemplations of the Virtues are based on brief indications by Rudolf Steiner for meditations which may be practised in accordance with the changing year..... Rudolf Steiner does not enumerate a series of Virtues, but directs us towards a path of inner work upon ourselves, whereby, in that we develop our potential qualities, and let them blend into one another, we become creators of our own Virtues, architects of our own being.

## **The Mandalas**

These mandalas have been done by Linoia (Noy) Pullen, contemplating the discipline of the mandala form during a time of recommended isolation from personal as well as global karma. Each mandala emerges from contemplation of each of the Virtues, which indicated on an inner level the construction of the mandala, also influenced by the situation during 2019/2020. The medium is the beeswax block crayon.

## January

21 December – 21 January



No beginning without **courage**. No courage without truth.

The source of true courage is the experience which brings together past and future, for truth is not bound to time. From life between death and rebirth, we bring with us into the life which lies before us the urge to mitigate the consequences of our actions in a previous earth life. This thought which turns toward the past, forms a link with the thoughts of the future. The fruit of a past life becomes incorporated into the spiritual germ of a human being, ripens in the life between death and rebirth, and will appear in a new life, transformed into new aptitudes and capabilities. In the interpenetration of these two thoughts, the present becomes the moment of courage. Such courage which is first practised inwardly, then realised in the experience of destiny, leads to the apprehension of immortality. It is that confident knowledge that in a past life, the strength was developed which places the individual before the eventualities in the destinies of a later life. It is this courage which redeems the frailty of the mortal body. In the encounter with people with whom one is connected by destiny, this courage becomes the awakener of the consciousness of immortality.

It becomes **power of redemption**.

A meditation which strengthens the power of this redemptive courage, is the immersion in destiny as a consequence of events we have brought upon ourselves.

## February

21 January – 21 February



Whoever has experienced through faith in destiny, the immortality of his own true essence, becomes discreet.

True **discretion** is the biblical metanoia, the reversal of the way of thinking, also called repentance. For the opposite of discretion is the surrender to the senses. The immortal force of courage which in the kernel of our being, loses consciousness of itself in the surrender to the senses and in outwardly directed disclosures. Through reversal, on the contrary, it becomes conscious of itself. Therefore, silence is concentration of force. It is the sheath around the spiritual in us which in the images of the sense-world and its language, is not communicable, and to the outward directed ear, is not audible. The ability to be silent becomes the protection which guards the spiritual as an inviolable secret of the soul. Discretion is worthy to be the bearer of this secret. It does not betray the confidence which the spiritual world and man grant to it, since it receives it into the soul-realm which is protected from the reversal (of our demanding nature). Discretion is the force through which the soul takes hold of itself, and experiences itself, not as an inhabitant of the sense-world, but of the spiritual world.

Thus it becomes **meditative force**.

A meditation upon silence is: I am a thought which is thought by the hierarchies of the cosmos.

## March

21 February – 21 March



In silence, the voice of the spirit is perceived as the voice of one's own true self. This perception is the sense of individuality. This sense is **magnanimity**.

Magnanimity is the great sense, which, full of interest and respect, gives space in itself to each different manifestation of being. Every individuality is to this sense, the expression of the spirit in the innermost being of every human being, which should not be tampered with. This sense feels itself responsible for each other individual, as well as for its higher essence. The experience of solidarity is, for magnanimity, not a subjective one. It has rather the objective significance of the responsibility for the spirit from which the individualities are born in common, out of which they grow independent, and which, on a higher level of free community, they are called upon to realise among themselves. Therefore magnanimity can do no other than ally itself in free affection, with each individual who lives truly as such, even though he does so in an unaccustomed way.

Thus it becomes **love**.

A meditation arising from such magnanimity is immersion in injustice that has befallen another individual, which one forgives as if it had been one's own experience, in that one works incessantly for its redemption



## April

21 March - 21 April



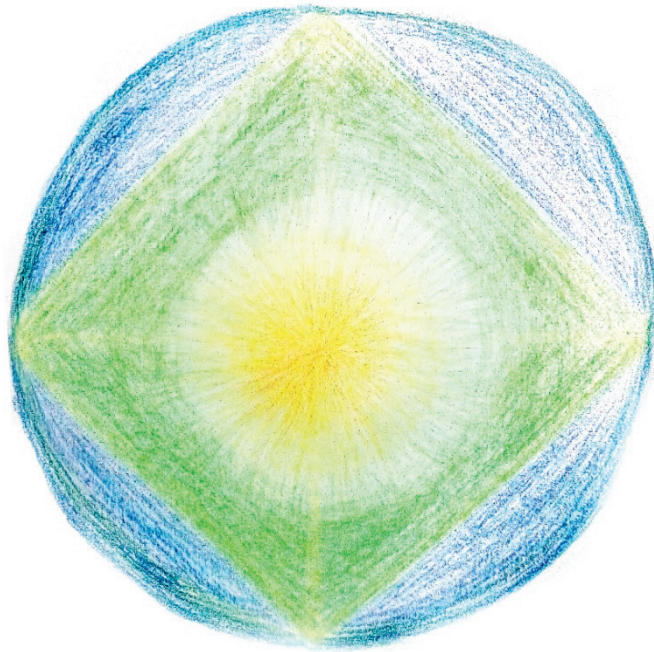
Love, which in the responsibility for each individual, experiences itself as a member of a free community, is **devotion**

In devotion is experienced the being of living thinking: of the spirit which lives in us as individuality. In living thinking, we do not develop our own subjective thoughts; rather the spirit thinks through the thoughts which indwell our being. The spirit does not do this as our master, but in that we unite with it in free action which at the same time, is perception. In reverence for the spirit in us and in all beings, we rise towards ethical individualism. The content of this reverence differs, however, depending on whether it is felt for nature beings or for human beings. We recognise nature beings through our thoughts, and men through their own thoughts. Through not thinking our subjective thoughts concerning other men, but in surrender to their own thoughts, our own individuality becomes the bearer of the other individuality. Through this thinking, when all superficiality is overcome, we lose ourselves in this other individual in order to find ourselves again within him. In this way, freedom turns into community for devotion. Thus this becomes **force of sacrifice**.

A meditation based on such devotion is immersion in the motifs of the losing and finding again in the lives of the leaders of mankind. (Buddha is found under the tree with the singers, the twelve year old Jesus is in the temple with the rabbis

## May

21 April – 21 May



The sacrificing power of devotion, which experiences freedom as community, becomes the experience of **balance**.

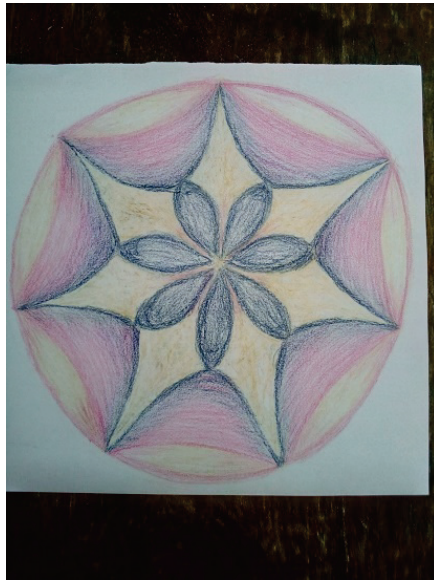
For this sacrificing power experiences the equivalent through its equivalent, the spiritual through the spiritual, individuality through individuality. This experience underlies every cognition. In the presence of cognition, through our own spirit, we find the spirit which resides in the world phenomena. Through a merely image-forming, receptive cognition, this would not be possible. Such cognition would remain outside a reality which would be complete without its participation. Only a true cognitive process, through a creative act, adds ideas to her perceptions which for human experience, to begin with, these lack, and thereby encounters the spirit which is hidden at first in the perceptions. Thus, in each true cognitive act, reality arises from an experience which it at first conceals. It has its source in the experience of balance in the encounter of spirit with spirit. In that man in the cognitive process regains the reality which he loses in his perceptions, he experiences simultaneously the coming into being of his own spiritual essence. In the reality which he experiences in his cognitive process, man has his origin as a spiritual being who determines his own spiritual birth and higher development. The cognition of identity through identity, which presents itself as the evolving of an independent individuality out of the spiritually penetrated world phenomena, is the true balance.

Thus it becomes **progress**.

A meditation upon such balance is to enter deeply into the experience of children learning to walk, in which balance becomes progress.

## June

21 May – 21 June



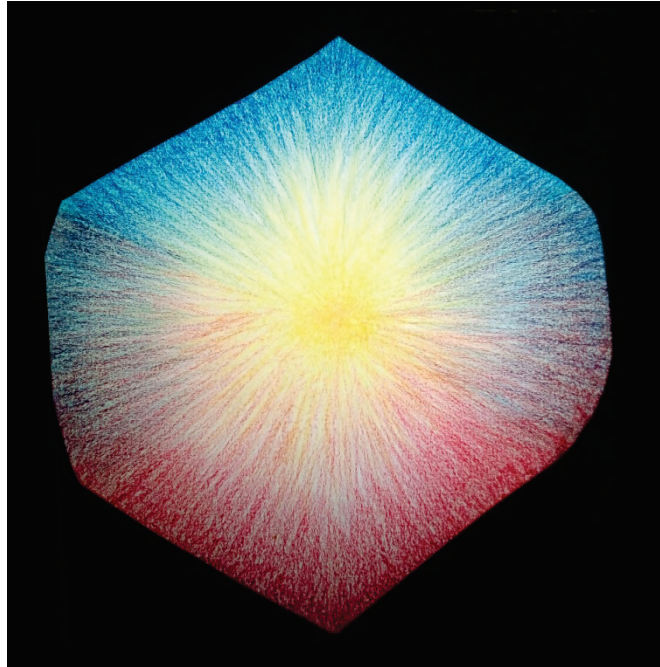
Balance experienced as progress is **perseverance**.

In perseverance, therefore, we are true to the mandate of self-development placed on us. But only such faithfulness enables us to be truly faithful to a task and to a person. For he is faithful who in the unceasing work which he accomplishes upon himself, fulfills what he owes to the world and to those human beings allied to him by destiny. So perseverance becomes **faithfulness**.

A meditation upon such faithfulness is the prologue to the Gospel of Saint John. (For it tells of the Word which we perceive in ourselves, when we are faithful to ourselves, to others, and to our task of endurance against all opposition.)

## July

21 June – 21 July



Such faithful perseverance is **selfless**.

True **selflessness** is equally far from rigidity as from dissolution. Obsequious dependence is not less self-seeking than rigid insistence on one's own prejudices and interests. True selflessness defends neither the narrowness of the subjective personality, nor does it lose itself in other people and objects. It is rather the middle between these two aberrations and temptations. In that it is dimmed, neither by the egotism of fear, nor by that of greed, it is pure. Purification is the path which through truth that unifies us with all beings, conquers fear, and through inner life liberated from all dependent greed, says yes to destiny. This selflessness which in this manner, through consideration and renunciation, finds itself, is self-assured. Aristotle, through his idea of purification (catharsis), designates initiation into the path of destiny as the task of the poet. This catharsis is gained through triumph over and transformation of the dangers which threaten the human creative centre.

Selflessness as the path to the mediating human centre becomes **catharsis**.

A meditation upon such selflessness is the Word: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through me."



**August**

**21 July – 21 August**



Such purified selflessness is true **compassion**.

True compassion experiences every suffering as its own, without losing independence of balanced judgement. Independence rather can have its origin only in compassion. For compassion is spiritual union. Everything however, which remains exterior, exercises influence or compulsion upon us. In the consciousness of a person who is not connected with us through interweaving compassion, we do not live as free individuals. For such a person avoids us, or (even in a form that is perhaps not conscious) wishes to make us dependent on him. In the same way, we can only avoid a person whom we encounter without compassion, or exercise some power over him. We are not less dependent on the person whom we meet in an attitude of domination than on one from whom we flee. Naturally, it is not a question here of outer attitude but of attitude in one's consciousness. There however, where spiritually we have united ourselves, we can neither become the object of the exercise of power, nor do we exercise power. This is not possible because our own being and that which is united with our own being, cannot be the target of our power.

## September

21 August - 21 September

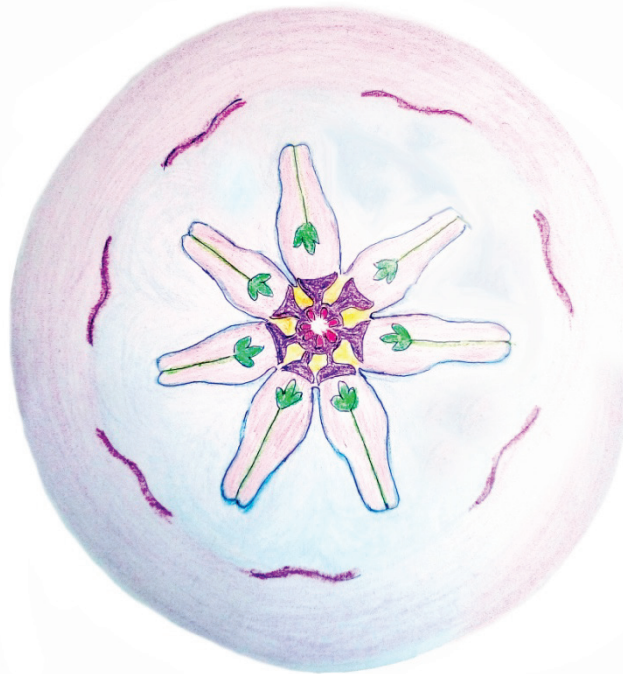


Compassion which becomes freedom restores sense and dignity to **courtesy**. Nowadays courtesy has become mere outward form, insofar that it is not considered utterly dispensable, and only recognised because it facilitates intercourse, or because it has become a habit. True courtesy recognises simultaneously, the higher human 'I', and the spiritual union of the higher ego beings in a free community. In the face of discourtesy, we are more offended by the self-debasement of the discourteous than by our own grievance. For the same reason, we feel each criticism which is not at the same time, recognition of the possibility of development, as a self-debasement of the critic. True courtesy therefore, is the free union with the higher nature of the person encountered. We experience ourself in him, and revere the spirit we have in common. True courtesy, however, goes even further. It experiences itself, not only in the higher nature of the one encountered, but it also experiences this within itself. Therefore it feels pained for him who did not succeed in expressing himself in word and deed as he really is. This feeling of pain is far more unbearable than the embarrassment of one's own failure. Furthermore, the courtesy feels itself shamed by later self-examination wherein it must take blame for having accepted superficially another person's inadequate self-expression, instead of attributing to him his most valid significance. Therefore, through understanding, courtesy completes and transforms, continuously, the imperfect. Furthermore, it leads one to create the opportunities which permit each person encountered to reveal himself. No less does it establish a certain aloofness with regard to a behaviour which denies one's own better nature. So it becomes **tact of the heart**.

A meditation upon such courtesy is: courtesy and tact of the heart relate to each other as diastole and systole.

## October

21 September - 21 October



Courtesy to the point of tact of the heart demands nothing for itself.

It asks only to assist other people, in fulfilling their social-artistic tasks, to give their outer behaviour the aspect of the primal idea living in them. Whoever is convinced that there lies in the things and beings themselves, the predisposition to their own perfection, is satisfied with them, and sees in the obstacles to their unfolding, necessary conditions of progress and the spur to personal activity. Only he who does not recognise the hidden plan of their unfolding in world phenomena, but expects transformations of being through exterior agencies, is dissatisfied.

Therefore the tact of heart is **contentment**.

This contentment is ever and again threatened by the contemplation of social and political conditions. And never was the cause for scruples in the face of these conditions more oppressive than in our time. What has manifested itself for decades in the most fearful manner, and threatens to manifest itself still more fearfully, can be understood in the sense of the here characterised contentment, only as sheet lightning of future spiritual phenomena; as clouds over which the light expands. Only after the downfall of past forms of social life can this receive its adequate form. From desperate need vision is born. But only when fear and horror in the face of events which press in from the future, are overcome; through faith in the fulfilment of daily demands, the eye can open itself to this vision.

So contentment becomes **equanimity**.

The meditation upon such equanimity is: to live in the conviction of the ever present help of the spiritual, in pure faith, with no security from outer life. Such is the demand of our time.

## November

21 October -21 November



Such equanimity holds the balance of **patience** in its hand.

Patience is the wisdom which unites itself with strength, the strength that unites itself with wisdom. Without wisdom our strength would become forbearance with no hope of escape; without strength, wisdom would become passive contemplation. Strength and wisdom are the pillars rising over land and sea, which bear the sun-face of the angel who commands the apocalyptic apostle to devour the book. True knowledge fulfils itself in activity; only the ever newly tested deed leads to valid action. The balance of patience determines the weight of the personality. Patience permits our knowledge to mature in active intercourse with world phenomena. Patience strengthens with valid judgment, the mood of expectation for the deed. Impatience tempts one toward prejudice and haste. He who acts out of spiritual cognition, submitting his action ever anew to his spiritually active judgment, possesses true patience.

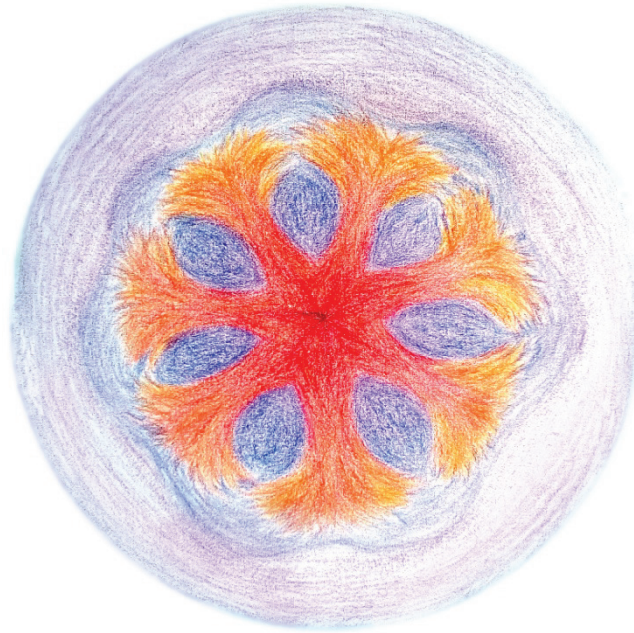
This becomes **insight**.

A meditation upon such judicious patience is the image of the Apocalypse: above the pillars of strength and wisdom shines insight.



## December

21 November – 21 December



This judicious patience **controls the tongue**.

For whoever speaks and judges too precipitously damages or hinders the ripening process which the truth of world phenomena produces in his judgment, and which permits his own activity to issue as ripened fruit from his intercourse with the world phenomena. Whoever speaks without awaiting this maturing process expresses only subjective opinions about a world which in its essence remains alien to him. Such expressions of opinion may receive the acclaim of those of like sentiment, and because of their consonance with conventional opinions, may achieve outward success. They are not the truth which is borne and executed with equanimity. Truth is rather the spirit of things which comes to birth in our cognition. The hasty word scares it away. Control of the tongue permits the spirit, mute and blind when enchanted in things, to become capable of seeing and speaking. Control of one's own tongue loosens the tongue of creatures who are longing for such disenchantment. They become disenchanted in that, in our discretion, their being becomes an organ which interprets itself in observation of its own enchanted condition. Thus world and self cross and interchange, in contrast to the state of our usual consciousness in which they outwardly and continuously stand juxtaposed. The essence of things becomes, within the activity of cognition in man, the organ of perception. Insofar as man exercises cognition, he experiences himself as a being spread over the totality of the manifest world. In control of the tongue, it is not the division between world and self that is experienced, but their crossover and interchange are felt as truth. Control of tongue is the fruitfulness of human cognition.

This control of tongue becomes **feeling for truth**.

A meditation upon such feeling for truth is:

*When man doth know himself,  
His self becomes the world;  
When man doth know the world,  
The world becomes his self.*