



THE VIRTUES

THE SEASONS  
OF THE SOUL

HERBERT WITZENMANN

*Herbert Witzzenmann*  
*The Virtues*

The Seasons of the Soul



Spicker Books

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by Folder Editions, N. Y. 1975  
New unabridged translation from the German by © Sophia Walsh,  
assisted by Jean Brousseau.

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## *Introduction*

### I

Revived by sleep, we feel a threefold quickening: our sight is freshened and made keen by light, our hearts are cleansed and quieted by warmth, our steps invigorated and emboldened by the richness of creation.

### II

Before our lips have vexed the early hour, let us go into the garden. We silently incline over an opening rose. What the flower petals show us in form, color and the piety of their fragrance is true, beautiful and good. This is because the rose unswervingly obeys universal laws; it raises up to jubilant display the shaping essence of the plant and it desires nothing for itself, wishing only to give others pleasure.

Such harmony puts us to shame, but at the same time it also lifts us up. Through it, we recognize that even though the natural part of our being must bow in reverence before ennobling innocence, yet all we achieve in ourselves through conscious culture surpasses what is woven in simplicity, however lovely it may be. It is we who can add to the gift received by the senses the threefold human dower of the ethical. Let us therefore spur our soul forces to join in free, equal and brotherly tourney with the rose.

I. Our *thinking*, versed as it is in all languages, allows the silent rose to speak. It can let the petals fall, conceal the rose once more in its seed state and out of this entice the blossom in new profusion. But always it is the same countenance on which our living concept reads each changing expression. It interprets what it reads by being a Proteus, capable of all transformations and assuming each aspect as its own. The form which this translation takes is to dissolve each state into movement; its purpose, to lead every movement back to its origin, the Word which utters man in that man utters it. The lightning of our will is the master of this magic power. If we let it strike our mental imaging and rouse from deathly rigor (which holds fast to what already is) the stirrings of life (which revolve in themselves what is to come), we shall cease being spectators and become participants in world occurrence. Reality is now no longer only a product which we duplicate, but rather a process in which we share. No longer do we mirror the wave in the brittleness of our mental imagery which fixes it, we follow instead the movement of the flow in which it shapes itself. By doing so, we re-enact with admiration the creative form of the rose. The same primal springs which course in it course in us too. Its coming into being is our own and our becoming is also its becoming. We celebrate the festival of transformation of all things through spirit.

This sympathetic adaptability of our discernment is protected by many guardians. We can easily mistake them though, because at first they wear masks. But we possess the discrimination to see through their disguises. It recognizes that people are meant to be each others' guardians. All

we need is mastery over ourselves. This is stronger than the urge to launch our own opinions, like swarms of gnats, against the views of others. Nobility of thought consists in providing the ground in which another's thinking can take root. We learn nothing through *our* concepts of another person's inmost being. It only reveals itself to us through his thoughts. And this less through their contents than through their train of meaning, timbre of feeling and tension of will. There comes about on a higher level, through our thought-inwardness, what occurs when the rose has its grace confirmed through its dignity, its wrought appearance through its creative origin. When we encompass with our silence another's thought, we learn more about the thinker than he can make apparent to himself. Our selflessness frees sight which until now was veiled by the mask of the personal. We meet the gaze of an individuality who is not limited to a single life on earth but is capable of many incarnations. From now on, the evolutionary force of this individuality fills what is evolving in our own being. In thinking others' thoughts, we exert a strength of soul which outdoes our own thinking will. When the other thinks in us, we do not add, as we do with the rose, the creative origin to the created appearance through the language of cognition (which draws its words from the primal language of thinking). Rather do we make a pure space of our silence (which expands all the more significantly, the more stringently it forbids itself any personal interference). Here there can be shown how the self-shaping of a human individuality towers above its naturally shaped state. Just as the creative origin of the rose irradiates its appearance, so does the superpersonal of another outshine the personal in him.



The superpersonal of which we have become aware is our protector. This is because the creative activity proceeding from it awakens all that is creative in ourselves. That this occurs owes its origin to such awareness, even if we have no consciousness of it. Everything truly creative is the child of renunciation. (There is no genuine creativeness without self-mastery; it is active deed. Our passions, demanding passive submission, want to subjugate us and others.) And renunciation alone leads humane thinking in us to humane thinking in him we meet. For the creative force of thinking is to renounce: its nature is boundless surrender. And the renunciation of thinking is creative force: it declares the most insignificant to be a creature of the universe. By doing so, thinking is the thread that links all things.

This renunciation is such a fundamental predisposition in our being and so indissolubly interwoven with it, that it casts its reflection on even the dullest consciousness. Even the cruelest of people still follows the track of fellow human thought. Only so can he find the means to manipulate his victim. Even he must make room for another's thinking in place of his own, if only for a single moment. Indeed, were there no remnant of such a willingness, there would be no kind of communication among people.

But we can make it our task to keep silent in full consciousness. This then opens up not only to us an understanding of the one we meet, but also to him a realm which he perhaps had not yet discovered for himself. In that we esteem someone more highly than he appears in his own everyday consciousness, we awaken in him the ideal of his own individuality. He begins to have a more genuine premonition of himself than his previous self-knowledge had allowed. And

the gaze that frees itself like this is of the greatest benefit to us also. It exhorts us to be similarly mindful of the best that lives in us. We feel that such a gaze is resting on us when, instead of presumptuous thinking, we exercise hearkening thinking. This reverential thought can be applied to the most insignificant, indeed to confused and even to antagonistic thinking. What it reveres is not the thought, but the thinking ego. This we respect as being always higher. It stirs our sympathy all the more intensely, the more heavily its spirit essence is burdened by the imperfect matter provided in the earthly body for the task of self-fashioning. And then particularly an immortal ego extends its spirit-filled thanks to selflessness for diverting its gaze from its own insufficiency. Assuredly, the confidence in achievement, which teaches us that everything imperfect is transient and that striving is continuous, can be transmitted to many whose despondency is banished by our smile. Such an appeal does not remain unanswered. A human ego for whom we evince the greatest respect through reassurance and reticence responds with the protection which creativeness spreads out around itself. Many who are simply bad wardens of themselves can thus become our protectors. Their influence spreads further than their knowledge. Through such an influence, which is often hidden from themselves, they help us to acquire the faculty of seeing the creative act in the created fact. We have become aware of the archetype of this faculty when people meet in thinking. It is the eye which senses how, in it, another's eye catches sight of itself. Yet a personality purblind by the body can pass by, oblivious to this encounter which clothes its immortal individuality for us. Indeed, in its everyday consciousness, it can confront us as our opponent. The objection that this

form of interrelation is not conventional or customary has no bearing.

Once we have acquired this inner awareness, we approach the rose with a new attitude. The creative faculty slumbering in us is awakened to its task through the spiritual encounter with another person. Now we have achieved a creative relationship to all beings. For the laws customarily governing them, guarded by the hands of higher beings, now form the woof of our own thought fabric. Only so do they become human. But having once entered into us, their working also necessitates our own vigilance. Only thought control, resisting will-o'-the-wisp inconsequence and wishful dreaming, makes us, through the veneration which it accords the divine, capable and worthy of raising the weightiness of the sensory up into the humanly ethical.

The eyes of the human individualities whose masks dropped before our reverence are the guardians and guides of such striving piety of thought. This we have extended also to them by enclosing their thinking with our silence. Now in return they watch over our reticence, that it always remind us of what is nobly human when the language of our thinking provides other beings with the means to speak. This constant presence of the human, not the sensory, is the truth. For truth is that which shapes and fashions, and access to it can only be found by the creative element in us which practices and esteems what is human and humane.

2. In a related way, our *will* adds to what is finished, that which begins; to the sensory, the ethical element of goodness. The meeting of people in their acts of will is the archetype of this ethical state.

Our magnanimity can give away, without concern for thanks or thanklessness, the fruits that ripened for it. Our generous trust is able to acknowledge friendship by returning good, because this is trusting generosity. Those who encourage our trust are, indeed, not mortal people who often disappoint us, but most surely immortal individualities into whose company destiny has led us. They exceed our hopes. If we invite their freedom to be a guest in our friendship, they will welcome our striving to provide the sensory with sense.

This striving stamps formable matter with the progressive impulse of the deed. It is the impulse that gives all things human shape. This shape, not the sensory, is the good. In order that the sensory become good, friendship continues to radiate the spiritual gaze which it awakened in its friend and received back from him. Friendship's tried and proven will imparts to the previously blind gift offered by its hand a gaze which is illumined by a friend's gaze. For present in the understanding which lets its gaze accompany the gift and rest on the recipient is the humanity it has assimilated. But control of the will, which disciplines deviation and inconstancy, first has to make us skilled and devout enough to receive such a gift. Thus endowed, and with the piety it shows to all creatures, it can refine and ennoble what is unconsciously sensory to what is ethically human. If the longing for redemption which lies spellbound in all things becomes the soul of our actions, it has need of this gardener's art. Only this makes human the growth urge in things. The seeds, which otherwise were implanted in them and given force by the highest of hands, are now entrusted to our care. From now on, all beings meet us as the heralds of a new task. But only he who has become independent of ev-

bodily incarnation imposes on it a burden which it is vainly trying to shake off. This ego is always something we look up to. Therefore we show our respect not for what was willed, but for the ego that wills. And because of this, our friendship can ally itself to the most unpretentious will, indeed to an erring or even to a criminal one. This friendship reaches the highest goal the will can set itself, access to which even enmity cannot bar. When our friendship thus expands into magnanimity, it makes our will attitude receptive for the inner presence of another's ego. Then every time we transform our clutching will (which, however proud it may be of its supposed strength, only shows its need for security) into fostering will (which makes our courage for freedom look ceaselessly for new ventures in placing trust), we are aware that receptivity is the true nature of our will. This receptivity, gifted with sight for the inner presence of another ego, turns its gaze to new and more significant goals such as we have not glimpsed until now. Thus the inner presence of a human individuality is of the utmost benefit to us. It is the answer to that other benefit which we confer when we refuse to acknowledge failure, but instead urge the individuality, towering above the insufficiency of the person, to prove true even in collapse. This probation we accompany to that inner domain of cognition and action which, to be sure, consciousness fettered by sense impressions ignores. However ready we are to support action seeking its goals in the sense realm, the probation which we favor with good will belongs to those mysteries which are the hidden wellsprings nurturing human communal life. In comparison, the levers and screws of public occupation with which people exhaust themselves boast little strength, despite appearances. On the contrary,

in the subconscious of those whose acts of will meet ours, our conscious trust unlocks a sphere which they often shut off from themselves.

Without a remnant of such compassion and co-volition ("co-cognition" was the ancient Greeks' term for forgiveness), there would be no kind of working together among people. Even someone pitiless is not quite devoid of pity. (Even the thief and the murderer need a picture of our habits and our conduct to show where their intent and violence may force an entry. And also those who want revenge seek to expose the spot where they can strike us. They therefore try to ascertain our inner state.) The very one who scorns our freedom cannot dispense with a sensitivity (however dulled) for the vulnerability of our springs of action. How otherwise could he make them subject to his coercion or retaliation? The trusting trustworthiness which joins all people is so intrinsically predisposed in our nature and interwoven with it that a glimmer of it even falls on crime.

Therefore we have an ever growing conviction that only sacrifice leads our will to be truly human towards the will to be truly human in those we meet. The sacrifice of our personal will rays back to us in the sacrificial will which we (perhaps only in secret) have roused. Our sacrifice springs from our trust that, in its depths, the will in a friend is sacred. For that reason we have made this will our own. This trust, for its part, however, originates in the blessing proceeding from the individuality of him we meet. This is the source of all trustfulness in our will, even if we are ignorant of this origin. The secret of creating trust is always more encompassing than the consciousness we can attain of it —, no matter whether we attempt to know of it or fail to know

of it. But (knowingly or unknowingly) we receive a gift which (secretly or openly) warns us not to go astray, just as our trust warned its bringer. His inner presence can be our treasure store. This presence is the gift made in exchange for the protection we afforded. To be sure, the will activity of the superpersonal in him we meet will not become our protector. It rather needs itself our protection against the lack of recognition which forgets its own higher nature. But his gift in return is greater than our gift. That which hovers out of reach of the personal will is always more fully human than such a will.

Here again, convention cannot make its ignorance serve as an objection, since spiritual encounter does not even exclude an enemy who thinks he can avoid community with us. Indeed, the friendships which link people despite their enmities can be greater than those sapped by the sloth of habit. Of course the everyday consciousness, turned outwards by the one (inwardly rather than publicly) close to us, need, in this case too, hardly become aware of its inner presence in us – although, of all belonging to him, this presence is most his own and can most move us and spur us on. This inner event (even if it has no value for believers in worldly success) is by no means of less significance for us than any external achievement to which we want to make just as much a contribution as the measure of our forces allows. For our friend's self-conquest, however, for which no outer evidence is valid testimony, we provide space in our certainty of belief. This does not inquire whether our friend is already carrying it out: the eternal in him will wrest it from his temporal part. In the same way as the perfection of the rose is surpassed by the sacrificial offering which is its

fragrance, so is the self-centeredness of him we meet, by his self-conquest. By believing in this, we experience once again the closeness to another's individuality which is not only capable of many incarnations, but is also their archetypal unity and inexhaustibility. Our friendship can bring to consciousness its inner presence, otherwise hidden from us by the superstition that thinks success can be calculated. Friendship, though, makes a gift of itself to what is in the future, that is, to the spiritual stature of every person (which casts the mortal part like its shadow into the present). Friendship does not seek to know this future aspect except as it can be divined through the present. But its formative potential can be sensed. Therefore friendship prefers to live not in its own intentions, but in the creative element which makes its friend circumspect in his intentions. Friendship is not a pact but a promise, recognizing in the unforeseeable of creative life the riches of the world, and the pledge of peace in the love of freedom. True friendship simply strives to foster the creativeness of a free person just because it is so unpredictable: the faculties we have should serve another person, not ourselves, so that he may shape them in accord with his being and so shape himself. He who is capable of friendship and knows its magic power to spread the breath of freedom abstains from any kind of calculation concerning people. He knows this annihilates all true progress, even if it seems to serve the furtherance of culture and general welfare. The meaning of friendship is this higher event which lets the blossom of true culture unfold. Through this event there occurs, once more on a higher level, what happens with the rose when its chasteness is glorified by its fruitfulness, its perfection by its sacrifice which turns into human feeling. The dignity of our

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will lies in taking up the noble content of another's intentions without imposing on them anything merely measured against ourselves. Whoever, on the other hand, follows urges which stir up human intentions, encircles other people as with snares (without noticing that they are traps in which he himself is caught fast). To become capable of true encounter, however, we simply need to tame our will-desires and their calculating stratagems. As soon as this succeeds, we at once become aware of the hidden flow of force which weaves between people. We can exert the resoluteness which drives away the mists of deception. It is we ourselves who at first veil the source of health. Of course, in our striving to imbue the world with humanness, we do not lack a safeguard. This is the hidden bond which, while woven by everyone, cannot be appropriated by anyone for himself, can instead only be received from others. But we fail to recognize this source of healing just as easily as we do that other one relevant to our thinking.

Nevertheless, the most human stirring of which we are capable is working in us. This is the vow which we make for the future. For our ethical deed achieves something which goes beyond creation as it extends to natural man, and would not manifest without spiritual man. Thus we become founders of something new. We can transform our impulses by activating the concept. Then they become winged shoes which lift our steps. Our intentions, on the other hand, as long as cognition does not set them goals, turn to traps which snap shut and do us violence. We are able, however, to ensoul our will with the virtue of selfless outpouring, by letting it have human form through our thinking. Our will can pluck a rose from the bush and give it to one who teaches or loves or suffers. But it is always the

same faith that enhances what is natural into a spiritual blossom and pours out for the recipient understanding, encouragement and vitality. Our will need not lag behind our thinking in peaceful tourney with the rose.

3. Our *feeling* in a similar way transforms discord into peace. It conjoins to the sensory the ethical of beauty.

Our feeling unites our thinking and our willing through its inwardness. It joins their two halves in a rounded whole. This is the work of its tolerance and consistency. If only it understands itself sufficiently, it practices tolerance towards the growing force of the past and consistency towards that heritage of the past which hampers the future. This ensures that our feeling is led towards the future by what has been and is not pressed towards the past by what is coming. It thus becomes a premonition of a world in which the currents of time no longer exclude each other. Interdependencies, in spirit-filled reality, are freedoms. It is feeling's goal to bring this about, because in its essence it is love. This reconciles and redeems.

Through our feeling we confer eternity on the moment that lets the rose bloom. This immortalizing bliss streams through us when we neither simply co-create its becoming in our thinking, nor in willing simply adorn its sense-perceptible blooming with a spiritual blossom. We encompass both when we let ourselves be gladdened by its beauty. The beauty of the rose, as the epitome of past and future, bears witness to its archetype outside of time. This gladness makes us beautiful also. It permeates us with freedom, joy and peacefulness.

Once more we may be assured of a safeguard. But this is now neither our protection, nor what is given in return for

our protectiveness. It is rather the trusting intimacy of both. What at first hid from our thinking under the mask of the personal, and fled at first from our unpurified will, must now free itself from a double hindrance. Only when it casts off simultaneously the cloak of self-obsession and the being cloaked by another's prepossession, can it unfold its true being. It behooves us therefore to practice the composure which banishes from our hearts the darting flicker of sympathies and antipathies. These want to allure others or chase them off and so only delude them into masking or arming themselves. Our composure, however, makes us adopt their individual way of feeling. So we achieve the inner calm needed for the most astonishing of all experiences. This is the premonition of the might of faith to move mountains. The barriers of the personal crumble once awareness of an approaching ego dawns and the urging of desires is silenced.

We ascend to this experience by three soul stages. Firstly we prepare ourselves in inner quiet for what is to come. Then, in loving abstinence, we think, not our own thoughts, but those of another. Finally, we attain to the cognitional insight that, in thinking another's thoughts in the motions of our soul, our own thought-will is not revealed but that of another ego. We are aware that, although this ego extinguishes our own, it lights up in us instead. This inner presence is one neither of mere thought nor of mere volition, but a fulfilled presence of essential being.

Another's ego present in us as essential being, though, would have to feel itself unworthy, if it did not join in a similar process. In reciprocal communication of being, the ego which disappeared from the consciousness of its original bearer fills the consciousness it meets and draws the ego

which was originally self-aware in this consciousness over into the other consciousness. Only from the position of being present in the encountered person can each ego now be aware of what has occupied the place which it filled the moment before with consciousness of self. It is the indwelling ego, not one's own. And it depends on this exchange of position whether other people are for us individualities or persons, bearers of immortality or bondslaves to mortality. [In order to deny this, the objection should not be made that it is a pure thought construction, that it is remote from anything we could attain. It is, on the contrary, quite the opposite of anything constructible; it is the testimony of soul-observation. This has access (as long as it is ready to acknowledge without preconception how far its gaze reaches) not only to the presence of a "strange" ego in its own consciousness (as the self-realization of another ego which extinguishes one's own act of self-realization). It also has access to the presence of its own ego in a "strange" consciousness (as the presence of one's own thinking conveyed through speech, gaze, gesture and the overall import of the encounter, as well as the presence of that which activates this thinking: self-accomplishment within another consciousness). And over and above this, it has access to the gaze directed towards the presence of the "strange" ego in its own consciousness from the viewpoint of the presence of its own ego in the "strange" consciousness. This directed gaze acquires its criterion for the preparation, capacity and readiness to accept another's ego into itself, on the basis of the presence of its own ego in the other's consciousness. Without a doubt, on a capacity to live devotedly and not self-centeredly in another's consciousness, depends that other capacity of accepting a "strange" ego devotedly into

oneself. Indeed it is only to such a state of our observational faculty that we can ascribe any kind of valid judgment on our capacities in general. All our capacities are offshoots of our capacity for community. Capacities are the capabilities of uniting with the things, tasks and goals they turn to. Their mandate and talent is to live in things and beings and let them live in us. And the measure of these capacities is the degree of this turning about of inner and outer. The archetype of the unifying capacity, however, and consequently of all capacities, is the union in human encounter. This is the origin and goal of all ability.] Only in the being's center of another person who gives us homeland in his understanding, do we gain the right viewpoint for proffering him our own understanding. We owe the pleasure in agreement extending beyond words and concepts to this experience. It is lifted up by another person's receptivity and looks across to its own being in which it does not find itself, it finds the presence of the other. By contrast, the poverty and misery of misunderstanding attends the fruitless effort to make oneself, instead of the other, better understood. (Only boundless tolerance can look up to the spiritual stature of another. It needs, however, the support of the strictest consistency. Through both, we call up in ourselves what is most genuine and true, so that in this part of us there may be revealed what is best in the other person preparing to live in us.) After the cross-exchange, the original conditions of consciousness are restored. But they become the starting point of a renewed intertwining. This alternation of one with the other is the pulse-beat of our human state. With its rhythm, it raises I and Thou to We. In We, each breathes the other in and out.

This complementing of one ego through the other is the archetype of human community. Community means that every ego within its being's scope manifests itself to the other, now giving, now receiving. We become the protector of the ego which we accept into ourselves; only in our reverential hearkening can it be truly present. For the ego which accepts us into it, on the other hand, we are the ones protected; but only our hearkening reverence can feel worthy of such protection. As the bearer of another ego at home in us, our soul state achieves the character of the universal, it reflects its likeness: for it is not solely in the personal that we are aware of a human being's spiritual essence. The ego that is borne, however, and indwells another ego's consciousness achieves the full value of the individual; it fulfills its substance: the spiritual essence of a human being, by filling a Thou, testifies that its worth surpasses the personal.

The way an ego thus breathes itself out into the protection received from another ego, and this breathing in of another's ego into the protection afforded it by the inbreathing ego (with the specific implications in each case of the individual and the universal) warms our feeling, however, only if we master in ourselves prejudices, sympathies and antipathies, as well as calculating intentions. The archetype of humanness can only reveal itself in the exchange of ego-fulfillments on a level far above the personally narrow, the lovelessly self-interested and the misuse of the will to harbor intentions. Such a level of experience with its tolerance, consistency and its candid belief in the ultimate conquest of all that divides, gives us harmonious balance of experience. It acknowledges the unfolding of another's ego in its own being with the selfsame reverential

equanimity as it experiences the unfolding of its own ego in the receptivity of another's ego. This awareness of the interchange of being (as the archetype of all capacities) is the archetypal experience of these manifold unions which are the work of our loving formative power. They make us gradually feel at home in inhabiting the world and let us hope to find, in defiance of all disillusionments, the friendship of all beings. It is the heart which receives warmth only to bestow warmth.

Here is the fountainhead of the beautiful, of the artistic. This is so intrinsically predisposed in our being and so indissolubly interwoven with it, that its light reflects even onto what disparages it. Even the Philistine seeks affirmation that acknowledges the way he is without imposing any conditions. To be sure, he believes that the recognition he requires applies to the inertia in which he feels at ease, not to self-change which senses the anguish of inadequacy. He calls this being comfortable, justified and competent. However much he debases himself by the mode of his aspiration and desires the abasement of others, his gaze nevertheless follows the swallow which swoops past him. Without the interchange of being which imbues community with warmth and is indeed the only means of transforming it from a mob into an alliance of peace lovers, there would be no compatibility, no feeling of security among people (even if the hint of anything truly communal should evade the notice of those experiencing subliminally). The glimmer (even if hardly noticeable) of this compatibility and security is the trace left by the beautiful even in the abhorrent. We can often become aware of the fading or the flashing of this trace, always when we feel ourselves strongest, not in self-admiration and self-commiseration, but in true

readiness to help. In such readiness to help, the giving and accepting of protection meet and interchange as the pulsebeat and life breath of people in whose communality an archetypally human element is present.

Such willingness to help, which permeates allies of the spirit, does not deny assistance even to the most inept, even to the hateful, and it even mantles the antithesis of the artistic in its merciful compassion. Its compassionate aid does not pay attention to what has been formed, but to the forming ego. This is always something higher. And it needs our concern most urgently if in one of its incarnations it must take the path along which it comes to know the deprivation inflicted on it by the act of forswearing beauty. An immortal ego especially thanks us with its hidden grace, when our pleasure in the forming deed (which creates a new image of essential being out of the unmined treasures of its individuality) heartens the impotence which paralyzes its formative power. It thanks and guards us through the exchange of spirit breath. Many, who are bad artists in working on themselves, can be our teachers because of this. They help us to develop the most splendid of our faculties. This is to discover the form spellbound in matter, the material spiritualized in form. Also this encounter remains concealed for everyday existence, although this faculty could be its comfort and its luster.

There are no limits set to the inwardness our feeling can have. Should it become conscious of the source of this inwardness, it then approaches the rose transformed. We sense the creative art spellbound in it. This puts the deformation of our souls (which lag so far behind the perfection of our bodies) to shame. Our souls feel that only by being reformed into works of art can they justify their continuing



existence. But they also feel encouraged to begin this work on themselves. Only if they do not slacken in their efforts can the forming of beautiful creations succeed. There is no art which can be practiced without experience in the art of forming oneself. But the true forming of oneself can just as little reach its goal without experience in the forming of artistic creations. Neither can do without the other because both are one and the same. This art, turning with like skill both in and out, lets us sense in its works (even if these are not lofty but simply and truly graceful) the moment as eternal and eternity as present here and now. (It is that lingering moment to which desire may not succumb and which renunciation may fashion into the shining semblance which is beauty.) Even if those who scorn the beautiful mock incessantly, the eternal present comes about, notwithstanding, in true art. For in artistic feeling, all division is dissolved, just because it turns its love toward what is individual. It devotes its whole skill to minting the intrinsic likeness of all beings, so that they can become the mirror and life-element of other beings. Every single part of a beautiful composition contains within itself the whole to which it belongs, in order to let it shine back out of itself. The beautiful thus vanquishes time, even if it manifests in time. It lets the sensory appear as something timelessly spiritual. Through the fact that time is annulled in experiencing the whole, we purify our hearts which are permitted to don the garment woven by beauty for the rose.

Thus we achieve a relationship with all beings which is full of imaginative force. For imaginative fantasy is the exchange of essential being in human encounter. This experience of interchange accords the Thou no less than the I a

higher form through their union in the We. It is the twofold art which through self-forming achieves the honor of forming other beings to a higher stage, and through the higher forming of other beings achieves the honor of forming oneself. These are the pinions spread by fantasy. For it, every being is a similitude of the created world surrounding it. Each for it becomes, at the same time, the seed of a world to come which is wholly saturated with the intrinsic self of each. Thus imaginative fantasy experiences itself through every one of its creations in a We. In this manner, the truth of a content is translated into the higher truth of form, and the goodness of a deed into the more gentle goodness of the shining semblance which is beauty.

Humility and enthusiasm become the authors of this inventive art, if people call on them to be their striving forces through a reciprocal giving and receiving of protection. This constantly fruit-bearing art, and not the sensory, is what is beautiful. For the beautiful is humble in bowing down to all beings, and proud in its enthusiasm which raises all beings above themselves. And only through humility and enthusiasm does will grow clear and thinking strong for a new day.

In feeling's experience of interchange, thinking and willing interwine, past and future, protection and protectiveness. The will is the hammer, thinking is the anvil. But it is feeling alone which breathes into the form that is to be forged the breath which awakens it to life. This is the life which, in the spirit of community, vanquishes death brought on by isolation. The exchange of essential being in human encounter is the archetype of the ethical whose essence is beauty.

#### IV

In noble tourney with the rose, may our thinking, feeling and willing succeed in adding to its sensory appearance a threefold ethical aspect. This continuation of natural creation is the silence, the inwardness and the sacrifice of the spiritual in man. Human community is the school of life for this high vocation. For if we did not think in ourselves, at least as a gentle resonance but continuously, the thoughts of other people, feel other people in us and ourselves in them, and also make the will impulses of other people our own, there would only be war of all against all. The three fundamentals of ethical life, however, because in them alone the worth and dignity of our soul powers are disclosed, are at the same time the fundamentals of being human and compassionate. Our thinking can admire the creation of the rose by helping to fashion it. By thinking the thoughts of other people, we provide our thinking with cognitional clarity. Our feeling can love the beauty of the rose by saying, "I am Thou, Thou art I". Through the exchange of essential being in human encounter, we imbue our love of beauty with warmth. Our will can ally itself with the goodness of the rose by having trust in world renewal. Accepting a strange will into our will is the sacrificial wellspring which steels this cognitional trust with spiritual courage. From this spring, flows the vow to devote the highest love to freedom (that of others as well as one's own). The eyes, hearts and hands which speak to us in human encounter are the protectors and admonishers of this threefold striving. They permeate our thinking with the fiery glow of will and illumine our actions with the light of thought. On our feeling which unites both, they bestow inwardness. But these three

have need of still further support. Tolerance, consistency and trusting faith confer on the united efforts of our soul forces the gift of harmony. Then they can display just as much composure as they do purpose. If we forge ahead so far, then the other forces which move and stabilize the world also enter the compass of our attributes and attainments, evoked by our work on ourselves. Sober and careful consideration puts our resolutions in agreement with our capacities. And what will then eventuate through our deeds will be steadied and encouraged by submission to what destiny concedes.

## V

1. The meaning of happiness is that we can raise the sensory in a threefold manner to the ethical and, in doing so, can imprint what is human on the sensory to a threefold degree. The colors of this happiness are the seasons of the soul which we call *virtues*. Through them, the process of maturing rejuvenates the soul, youth's invigoration turns to a calm, clear, as though sun-ripened, awareness.

2. The virtues contract to seeds the treasures gathered for us by the past, and expand the creative urge reposing in us as a germ to seek inventively and find the future. They are the great transformers.

3. They strike deep roots in what is human so that we firmly hold our ground against upheaval, and at the same time they are strides of progress hastening ahead of the world's course so as to follow thus its spiritual guidance. They grant us faith, love and hope.

4. They are cheerful, for they counteract the pull of our bodily nature which wants to dull our thinking. They are

earnest, for they are the conscience which watches over our constancy. They give us strength and wisdom.

5. Since in their manifold diversity of form they are nonetheless unanimous, they can make whole again whatever is fragmentary. Since their light appears in many colors, they expose the incompleteness of every point of view which considers itself a whole. Thus they administer a strengthening remedy for every one of our weaknesses. They heal despair to humility and arrogance to enthusiasm.

6. They trust in the ultimate victory of freedom in all human hearts. Indeed, to this victory they themselves owe their origin. They break any fetter which wants to chain their ethical love for their deeds to worldly success. Thus they are the protectors of human community.

7. We have sight of them, when our souls' deliberations, purified by our spirit, circle through the stations of world orientation as the planets do within the zodiac. For through self-denial and indeflectible purpose, we imbue our motives with that concord and assurance which, in striving for their goal, need not regard themselves wholly unworthy of the harmony and balance ensouling the heavenly bodies with movement and order. For none of the members of the spirit-filled solar system and of the healthy soul organism retains what is achieved for itself. Rather, each contributes his share in reciprocal support of the whole to which it belongs, and continually receives in return new efficacy.

## VI

The virtues, which can only develop their influence in man, surpass nature. They let culture issue from nature and so continue what has been left unfinished in natural creation.

Thus the virtues become our most glorious helpers. In their grace and dignity, they appear to us as loving and lofty beings. They resemble the muses because they make the world poetic. But they do not prove their artistry solely by conjoining the ethical to the sensory. It is just as much part of their ability to extend the ethical on into the sensory. In this way, they act as ennoblers of our bodies by increasing their sensitivity. The goal of this ennoblement is to remold our consciousness, which initially raises a barrier between us and the world, into an organ of perception which joins us to the spirit in things. But the virtues' sphere of influence spreads even further. It embraces all the circumstances and concerns of our existence. For the virtues aspire to give this a form corresponding to the true, the beautiful and the good.

Their most secret and at the same time most apparent influence, however, the virtues exert in our soul life. As the grounds of old-age cheerfulness and the springs of youthful earnestness, the inner seasons impart to our soul life (through contraction and expansion, firmness of stance and strides of progress, cheerfulness and earnestness, humility and enthusiasm, love and zeal for freedom, purification and world orientation) not only multiplicity of coloring of character but also homogeneity and unity of part and structure. This last evolves its power of uprightness not from the diversity of these seasons but from their union. For no one of the virtues excludes the others; on the contrary, each calls the others to come. The archetype of growth and becoming which is at one and the same time root, blossom, fruit and seed, transforms its upward striving into upright posture. Thus it becomes human worth and dignity. Therefore, too, the roses of the soul can bloom at Christmas time.

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## VII

For the inner life of our soul forces, a life unrestricted by time, sleep is more than just a boon of nature. It is no longer solely the most precious gift which we receive, but we also bring to it the felicity granted us by freedom. For through victory over the lower part of our being, thinking and will combine in us to questions which may legitimately be asked in the spirit. With these, we reverently approach our guardians. We wait for the answers which sound as long as our outer senses are closed. The resonance of what we hear makes sensory and ethical become one single being. Then our steps are led by wisdom as well as fortified by goodness, our hearts are healed by spirit-inwardness as well as warmed by beauty, our eyes are sure of aim through sacrificial courage as well as keen of sight through truth. The intonation of our questioning which accompanies us through the night, sounds on into the day and endows our awakening, even if this will long need the support of our body, with the loveliest assurance. This foretells the spreading, at long last, of those pinions destined to bestir themselves in flight, once our spirit has overcome all lack of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This preface, together with the reflections on the virtues in the conclusion, was based on indications which we owe to Rudolf Steiner; more precise references will be found under "notes" at the end of this book.

*The Virtues*

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Meditations for the months  
of the year



## January

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December 21 to January 21

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

The source of true courage is a soul event which integrates past and future, for truth is not restricted to time. From the life between death and a new birth, we bring into the earthly life ahead the impulse to correct the consequences of our deeds in a previous earthly life. This thought turned toward the past is linked to a thought of the future: the fruits of a former life are incorporated into the spiritual germ of the human being, ripen in the life between death and a new birth and then appear in a new life, reshaped into talents and abilities. When these two thoughts interact, the present becomes the moment of courage. Such courage, practiced in inner soul anticipation and exercised in the outer events of destiny, leads to the soul experience of immortality. It is the trust-filled consciousness of the fact that the force is fashioned in a former life to confront the individual with the events occurring in the destinies of a later life. This courage becomes the redeemer from the fallibility of the death-ridden

body. But as the bearer of this consciousness of immortality, when it meets those connected by destiny, it also becomes the awakener of this consciousness in them.

It becomes *redemptive power*.

A meditation which strengthens courage in its redemptive force is the contemplation of destiny as a consequence of self-occasioned events.

## February

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January 21 to February 21

He who has learned to know the imperishable nature of his own true being by trusting in destiny becomes *reticent*.

True *reticence* is the biblical metanoia, change in the way of thinking, also called repentance. The opposite of reticence is surrender to the senses. The undying force of courage, which is the core of our being, loses consciousness of itself in surrender to the senses, in external communication. Through changing its way, however, it becomes inwardly self-aware. Reticence therefore is a fortifying of forces. It sheathes the spiritual in us which is neither communicable in the images of the sensory world and its speech, nor audible to the outwardly listening ear. Silence is the protection which keeps the spiritual as an inviolable secret of the soul. Reticence is worthy to be the bearer of this secret. It does not disappoint the trust placed in it by the spiritual world and by human beings, since it lifts this trust into the soul domain guarded by a change of way (of our desirous nature). Reticence is the force by which the soul grasps and experiences itself as belong-

ing not to the world of the senses but to that of the spirit.

Thus it becomes *meditative power*.

A meditation on keeping silent is: I am a thought which is thought by the hierarchies of the cosmos.

## March

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February 21 to March 21

Keeping silent allows the voice of the spirit to be heard as the voice of one's own true being. This hearing is the sense for individuality. This sense is *magnanimity*.

Magnanimity is the generous sense, full of interest and respect, that makes room in itself for every other expression of being. Every individuality is acknowledged by this sense as the inviolable signet of the spirit inmost in every human being. This sense feels responsible for every other individuality, as it does for its own higher being. For magnanimity, the feeling of solidarity is not at all subjective. It means, quite objectively, to be responsible to the spirit which is the common origin of individualities, from which they gain independence and which they are called on to realize together at the higher level of free community. Magnanimity therefore cannot do otherwise than unite in free affinity with every individuality which lives as a true exemplification of such, however unusually.

Thus it becomes *love*.

A meditation on such magnanimity is the contemplation of injustice done to another individuality, which one forgives as if suffered by oneself while trying unremittingly to have amends made.

## April

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March 21 to April 21

The love which bears responsibility for every individual and so feels it is a member of a free community is *dedication*.

In dedication, the being of living thought, the essential spirit which lives in us as the individuality, is experienced. We do not unfold our subjective thoughts in living thinking; the spirit rather thinks through us the thoughts which dwell in beings. The spirit does this, however, not by overwhelming us, but in that we unite ourselves with it in the free deed which is at the same time beholding. In reverence for the spirit in us and in all beings, we raise ourselves to ethical individualism. The content of this reverence, however, differs according to whether it applies to the beings of nature or to human beings. Natural beings we comprehend through our thoughts; human beings, through their own. By not thinking our subjective thoughts about other people, but by devoting our thoughts to thinking theirs, we make our own individuality the bearer of another's individuality. Since externality is wholly overcome in thinking, we lose

ourselves in this other individuality only to find ourselves in it again. In this way freedom becomes community for dedication.

Thus it becomes the *power of sacrifice*.

A meditation on such dedication is to contemplate the scenes of losing and finding again in the lives of leaders of humanity. (Buddha is found under the tree with the singers, the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple among the teachers.)



## May

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April 21 to May 21

The sacrificial force of dedication which feels freedom as community becomes the experience of *balance*.

For this sacrificial force feels like through like, the spiritual through the spiritual, individuality through individuality. This feeling is the basis of every cognitional act. By cognizing, we find the way through our own spirit to the spirit latent in world appearances. This would not be possible using a cognition which is merely the recipient of replicas. As such, it would remain outside reality, which would be finished and complete without its participation. By a creative act, however, true cognition combines ideas with perceptions which for human knowledge are initially devoid of idea, and by this act it meets the spirit initially concealed in perceptions. Thus reality comes about in every true cognition out of a confrontation which initially conceals it. Out of the reality which arises in man's cognizing, he takes his origin as a spiritual being which decides for itself about spirit birth and higher development. The cognizing of like through like, which shows the emergence of an independent

individuality from spiritually permeated world manifestations, is true balance.

Thus it becomes *progress*.

A meditation on such balance is the contemplation of the way children learn to walk, which allows balance to become progress.

## June

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May 21 to June 21

Balance experienced as progress is *perseverance*.

Only he who tirelessly penetrates world phenomena with his own being progresses towards this being's true form. This progress does not by any means first begin where it is fully transparent for self-observation. On the contrary, the true motivation underlying all perseverance is the fact that every activity derives more or less consciously from the archetypal activity of thinking; that the success of every outwardly directed act depends on the meeting of one's own spirit with the spirit latent in things; and that we not only shape the object of our activity, but also ourselves. All learning and ability is based on this. This is the meaning of Hegel's saying: "The instructor instructs himself." By persevering, we are therefore faithful to the mandate of self-instruction implanted in us. But only such faithfulness enables us to remain faithful to a task, to a person. Faithful is he who, by working ceaselessly to make something of himself, fulfills what he owes the world and the people linked with him by destiny.

Thus perseverance becomes *faithfulness*.

A meditation on such faithfulness is the prologue to the gospel of John. (It proclaims the Word which we hear in ourselves when we keep faith with ourselves, with others, and with our task by persisting against all hindrances.)

## July

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June 21 to July 21

Such faithful perseverance is *selfless*.

True *selflessness* is equally removed from hardening and dissolving. Adulating dependence is no less self-centered than a rigid insistence on one's own prejudices and interests. True selflessness neither defends the narrowness of the subjective personality nor loses itself in other people and things. It is rather midway between these two deviations and temptations. Since it is not obscured by the selfishness of fear or by that of greed, it is pure. Purification is the path which overcomes fear through the truth that unites with all things, and affirms destiny through inner life that liberates from the dependency of desire. This selflessness, by finding itself through consideration of others and self-denial, is self-assured. With the idea of purification (*catharsis*), Aristotle points to initiation into the path of destiny as being the task of the poet. This *catharsis* is achieved by vanquishing and transforming the dangers which threaten the human center of balance.

Selflessness, as the path to the human center, becomes *catharsis*.

A meditation on such selflessness is the saying: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

## August

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July 21 to August 21

Such purified selflessness is true *compassion*.

True compassion experiences all suffering as its own, without losing self-sufficiency in its mature judgment. Self-sufficiency can actually only have its source in compassion. For compassion is spiritual union. Everything remaining external to us, however, imposes on us influence or coercion. If another's consciousness is not linked with ours by the compassion weaving between us, we do not live in it as free individualities. For such a person avoids us or desires (even if in a form of which he himself is perhaps not conscious) to make us dependent on him. In just the same way, if we approach a person without compassion, we can only turn aside from him or try in some form or other to dominate him. But we are no less dependent on one whom we view with a coercive attitude than we are on one from whom we flee. Naturally this is not a matter of outer behavior, but of states of consciousness. Once we have reached a spiritual union, however, we cannot be subjected to the use of force, nor do we use force ourselves. It is not possible

since our own being and the one united with it cannot be the object of our use of force. Cognition therefore excludes force, and compassion is a form of cognizing. Even in compassionate union (which is of course wholly inward) with one who merits revulsion, we do not degrade ourselves. On the contrary, through it we release the higher aspect hidden in him, as it is hidden in everything of a lower nature without its being conscious of the fact. Thus true compassion not only makes us free, it also frees those it encompasses.

Thus it becomes *freedom*.

A meditation on such compassion is: Compassion is the sheath in which the free heart beats.



## September

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August 21 to September 21

Compassion which becomes freedom restores to *courtesy* its meaning and dignity.

Courtesy today has become a formality which, insofar as it is not deemed altogether dispensable, is still recognized only because it eases relations or because it has become a habit. True courtesy discerns at the same time both the higher human ego and the spiritual union of higher ego beings in a free community. Faced with discourtesy, we are therefore more offended by the self-humiliation of the discourteous one than by our own hurt. For this reason, we feel that every criticism which is not at the same time acknowledgment of potential development is self-debasement of the critic. True courtesy, on the contrary, is free union with the higher being of him we meet. We experience ourselves in him and show esteem for the spirit common to us both. True courtesy goes still further though. It experiences not only itself in the higher being of the one it meets, but this higher being also in itself. It feels injured on the other's account if the latter did not succeed in expressing himself in

word and deed as he is in truth. This feeling of injury is far more unendurable than the discomfiture at one's own deficiency. Even more does courtesy feel ashamed if at any time on later self-examination it has to blame itself for the fault of having remained caught in the surface aspect of another's unfitting expression of self instead of having accorded the other the significance worthiest of him. Thus courtesy constantly supplements and transmutes what is imperfect out of its own understanding. It knows, moreover, how by its attitude to introduce the opportunities which enable everyone it meets to speak out, to utter what is in him. But it nonetheless holds aloof from a behavior which disavows its own better nature.

Thus it becomes the *heart's tact*.

A meditation on such courtesy is: Courtesy and tact of heart relate to one another as diastole and systole.

## October

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September 21 to October 21

Courtesy, enhanced to tact springing from the heart, desires nothing for itself. All it desires is to help others fulfill the socially artistic task of imbuing their outer appearance with the translucent semblance of the archetypal idea living within them. Whoever is convinced that in things and beings themselves the disposition to their perfection is latent, is content with them as they are and regards obstructions to their development as necessary conditions for progress and spurs to individual activity. Only he is discontented who fails to see in world phenomena themselves the hidden plan of their evolution and expects instead outer measures to effect essential changes.

Therefore tact springing from the heart is inner peace, *contentment*.

This contentment is always being threatened by reflections on social and political conditions. And faced with these conditions, never was cause for concern more pressing than in our times. What has become apparent over decades in the most frightening way and threatens to become even more frighteningly ap-

parent can be understood, in the sense of the inner peace just characterized, only as sheet lightning heralding a spiritual manifestation, only as clouds across which the light is spreading. Only after the disintegration of past systems can social life receive its fitting contemporary form. Out of need, vision will dawn. But only when the fear and horror of events looming from the future are vanquished by the trusting fulfillment of daily demands can eyes open to this vision.

Thus contentment becomes *composure*.

A meditation on such composure is: To live in pure trust without any outward security, in the certainty of the ever-present help of the spiritual world – this is the demand of our time.

## November

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October 21 to November 21

Such composure holds in its hand the scales of *patience*.

Patience is wisdom that is paired with willpower, willpower that is paired with wisdom. Without wisdom, willpower would be inescapable endurance; without willpower, wisdom would be inactive contemplation. Willpower and wisdom are the pillars rising up over land and sea bearing the sun-countenance of the angel who tells the writer of the Apocalypse to eat the book. True cognition is fulfilled in doing; only deeds that are re-examined every time lead to genuine action. The scales of patience determine the weight of the personality. Patience, in active interchange with world phenomena, allows our cognition to mature. Patience, in judgment commensurate with reality, heightens the expectant mood of action. Impatience misleads into prejudice and prematurity. He, however, who acts out of cognition, who submits his actions each time to the judgment of his cognition, possesses true patience.

Thus it becomes *discernment*.

A meditation on such discernment is a picture from the Apocalypse: Above the pillars of willpower and wisdom, discernment shines.

## December

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November 21 to December 21

This discerning patience *controls the tongue*.

Whoever speaks and judges hastily, harms or hinders the maturing process which brings the truth of world phenomena to harvest in his judgment and lets his own action emerge as ripened fruit from his interaction with world phenomena. He who speaks without waiting for this ripening to happen merely utters personal opinions about a world which in its essence remains alien to him. Such communications of opinion may garner the applause of the like-minded and, by conforming with common usage, meet with outward success. They are not the truth which is patiently won and tried in practice with equanimity. Truth is rather the spirit of things opening its eyes in our cognition. The word uttered in premature haste frightens it away. Control of the tongue lets the spirit in things, lying dumb and blind under a spell, become able to see and speak. Control of one's own tongue loosens the tongues of creatures sighing for the spell to be thus broken. The spell is lifted from them when in our reticence their being becomes an organ of percep-

tion that interprets itself in the gaze resting on its spell-bound state. In this way, world and self cross over and change places, in contrast to the state of ordinary consciousness in which they confront each other externally, disparate and fixed. The essence of things become an organ of perception within cognizing man; man, when he cognizes, experiences himself as a being spread out over the totality of world phenomena. In control of the tongue, it is not the separation of world and self, but their crossing over and exchanging places, which is felt as truth. Control of the tongue is the fruitfulness of human cognizing.

Thus this control becomes *feeling for truth*.

A meditation on such feeling for truth is:

When man gains knowledge of himself,  
His self becomes for him the world;  
When man gains knowledge of the world,  
The world becomes for him his self.



## Conclusion

1. The introductory remarks on the genesis of the virtues require an explanation, as do the reflections on the essence of the virtues. For the gravest doubts must necessarily be leveled against both. It could rightly be objected that human affairs all over the world do not by any means deserve to be termed virtuous or, indeed, even humanly worthy. That there has hardly ever been a time when hypocrisy and self-delusion hid such mendacity, so much fear, hate and cruelty under their smokescreen. That a deluded humanity is hastening to its own destruction across an abyss of lurking danger on the thin ice of cliché, convention and routine. That in view of this proximity of all attitudes and circumstances to the brink of catastrophe, one would be judging the present sketch of an unworldly idealization of human potential much too leniently by deeming it a mere playful eccentricity to be passed over with a shrug. For if forces meant for action continue to be distracted from things which can and must be achieved on the face of the earth by being made to marvel at intangible cloud bowers, then their readiness to cope with daily demands will be more and more weakened. Therefore it must be considered nothing short of reprehensible to rob the step to the nearest necessities of its sure footing through dizziness induced by looking up to the highest goals. For where can it lead to set up a

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standard which only the noblest effort satisfies if our world lacks even the humblest reliances; if an understanding which leaves the other free and a readiness to help without ulterior motive have been supplanted (often under the cloak of humanitarianism) by calculation and the use of coercion? To demand everything is to achieve nothing, whereas inwardly and outwardly great things are accomplished in the end, provided the nearest possible changes and advances are arranged to follow one another in the right order. More important than grand words is the renewal of the primal rules of good will and decency.

2. This protest deserves assent insofar as it is a warning not to forget, in admiration of an ideal, the distance separating reality from it. At the same time, the reflections presented here are not in the least concerned with a mere insubstantial idea devoid of weight for practical life but relate to an entirely factual reality. Perhaps it would not lack relevance to allude to this in an explanatory way.

Man is a "thought being" (Rudolf Steiner). The fact that he can determine himself and that his feeling of self is only satisfied by becoming the expression of his self-determination, bears this out. We are only capable of self-determination, however, through our concepts and ideas. If we do not act out of the cognitional insight which they provide, we cannot ascribe to ourselves the determining factor which we follow. On the contrary, we are then prevailed on by forces arising out of heredity, by influences from a local or social environment as well as by authorities to which we consciously or unconsciously submit.

That we are a thought being means, however, that we are a threefold being. Through our thinking, we firstly con-

front the world as a single being, since we seek and find something in our thoughts which it initially does not offer us. Through our thinking, we secondly join the contents of our observation with each other and with ourselves and by doing so attain to a "total existence in the universe" (Rudolf Steiner). And through our thinking, we thirdly unite the two poles of our being, the individual and the universal, with one another. We breathe ourselves out into our universal being and draw out of it the life breath of our individual existence which we breathe in. In this way, we let the interplay between expansion and contraction become the content of our being. This, in rhythmical alternation, finds itself in the world, in the latter's cognitional content, and the world in itself, in its own thinking. The water which issues from a spring in a compressed jet expands further and further through evaporation only to return then through condensation to its place of origin.

This fact is the origin of the virtues, as has already been described from another point of view in the introduction. For human encounters are by no means only the kinds occurring between egos confined within themselves. On the contrary, in such an encounter, the universally human always towers over the individually human of our own being and of him we meet. Only through such towering above ourselves, from which our virtues spring, are we truly individualities. In seeing this, soul observation gains a vantage point for an understanding of the laws governing human evolution. It is clear that human development proceeds in the alternation between bodily determined manifestations and purely spiritual forms of being. Thus it appears as the succession of repeated earthly lives of a human being's spiritual essence and of the states in a spiritual world such as

are devoted to the assimilation of past earthly experiences and the preparation of future ones. This swing of the pendulum moves between being incarnated, on the one hand, in a bodily determined form of being within a surrounding world from which we distinguish ourselves, and detaching ourselves, on the other hand, from the bodily determined form of existence by the cognitional act which provides us (qualitatively) with a total existence. This is the process which is continually repeated in our waking consciousness. Again and again we draw our individual consciousness out of our universal existence, in order constantly to give it back (within the compass of our cognitional activity which never ceases as long as we are awake) to our universal consciousness. This occurrence is at any time accessible to our soul observation. It can therefore direct our thinking gaze away from the everyday experience of the lesser body-spirit-rhythm to the archetype in the greater rhythmic pattern of our being which manifests as the succession of the body-bound and body-free states of our spiritual being.

The connection of a universal factor with an individual one, apparent to soul observation as the basis of our being, is therefore an inner circumstance differentiated in two directions. Depending on the observational viewpoint, this circumstance can be regarded as the origin of the virtues or the developmental law of the human individuality. For it is the same thing which is observable in both manifestations, as has been described in the introduction: the human virtues unfold through the revealed and concealed relationships which connect people. In these relationships, the manifold situations are apparent through which the personal and the impersonal come into interplay within the single human being, as also between people who meet.

purified urges and passions. I now look, for example, in spirit at the rose and tell myself: in the red rose petal I see the color of the green plant sap changed to red; and the red rose complies, as the green leaf does, with the pure, dispassionate laws of growth. May the red of the rose now become for me the symbol for such a blood as is the expression of purified urges and passions - which have cast off what is lower and resemble in their purity the forces working in the red rose. I now try not only to assimilate such thoughts through my understanding, but also to let them become livingly active in my feelings. I can have a sense of bliss when I picture the growing plant; I can generate the feeling in me of the way certain higher perfections must be purchased at the price of acquiring urges and desires. This can change the bliss which I previously had into a feeling of earnestness; and then a feeling of liberating joy can rise in me when I immerse myself in the thought of the red blood which can be the bearer of inwardly pure experiences like the red sap of the rose. All depends on not being devoid of feeling in surveying the thoughts which serve to build up a symbolic mental image. After one has steeped oneself in such thoughts and feelings, they are to be transformed into the following symbolic mental image. Picture a black cross. This is to be the symbol for the vanquished lower element of urges and passions; and, at the place where the beams of the cross intersect, seven red, radiant roses may be thought, arranged in a circle. These roses are to be the symbol for a blood which is the expression of purified, refined passions and urges."

4. The explanations briefly given here for an understanding of what is meant, could, it is true, have been presented first

to forestall objections. But the main purpose of this work is not to communicate the views of the author in a transferable form. It is rather to stimulate by development inner movements, the co-enactment of which is an example of the way to make the virtue-building process viewable. For this reason, then, explanation was allotted its appropriate place as a supplement.

If this retrospective gaze, however, assesses what it has beheld and gains a clear view of what it was shown, then it discovers that the cultivation of the seasons of the soul, and their modern renewal, which we owe to Rudolf Steiner, allow the greatest longing of present-day humanity to find hope again. Although most people hide this longing from themselves, it nevertheless torments all souls and, as long as they do not raise to consciousness what is at the root of their deep discontent, it drives them to drugged escapism and outbursts of violence.

If the attempt is made in what follows to clothe in words the deepest soul yearning of present-day humanity, then many will not want to recognize themselves in the description and will perhaps even reject it with scorn. But it is only fear of the alteration in being and life demanded of them by their inmost aspiration which prevents them from exerting a self-knowledge which affords us the prospect of the most glorious hope while imposing on us the strictest self-denial.

Three experiences, to which numerous of a similar kind can be added, are useful in providing us with a better understanding of ourselves.

The first: When we follow a woodland path to reach our destination (it could also be a street, but then the experiences, although not less stimulating, are more difficult to grasp), our surroundings move for our perception at an

*Notes to the First German Edition, 1972*

The studies on the virtues owe their origin to a friendly invitation. They were first published in the *Star Calendar* for the year Easter 1969 to Easter 1970, Philosophic-Anthroposophic Press (Dornach 1968). They are printed in this edition for the second time in an almost unaltered form. The first printing included a preface which has been replaced by a new introduction on the origin of the virtues. The previous preface with the title "Rudolf Steiner on the Virtues" is included below in its entirety. It contains certain explanations of which the reader of this book must be aware.

"Rudolf Steiner has attributed twelve virtues to the cycle of the year. The meditative character of this arrangement is already evident in the fact that qualities not conceptually designated are linked with certain time indications or periods. It is rather a matter of twelve soul motions, twelve inner steps which can be taken in keeping with the course of the year. These indications begin therefore as follows: 'To January 21: Courage becomes redemptive power; to February 21: Reticence becomes meditative power' and end with: 'to December 21: Control of the tongue (speech) becomes feeling for truth'. The period of inner transformation lasts in each case from the twenty-first day of a month

to the twenty-first day of the following month. Virtues are consequently not qualities which one possesses or acquires but exertions, overcomings and enhancements. It can be seen that Rudolf Steiner does not list the virtues in categorized order but presents the dynamic activity of our essential being as it shapes virtue in working on itself. Virtues are transitions, examples of path-seeking and path-finding.

"The inner path is the constantly moving mean between being body-free and resurrecting to a spiritually molded state of being. Virtues are stages of the constant struggle to achieve a middle way between divergencies. As witnesses to the experience of such a center of balance, they are described by Rudolf Steiner not as achievements but as steps of progress. They are the reflective awareness in between remembrance of the spirit's descent and premonition of the spirit's goal. They are the motion of path-finding which yet is quietude because it ascertains the right direction through truth and inner life.

"The attempt has been made to find adequate expression for the dynamic experience of the virtues by suggesting a meditation appropriate to the virtue at each successive step. Almost all these meditations rely directly or indirectly on indications made by Rudolf Steiner. Since they are intended as suggestions, they can only be a kind of introduction to such meditations as better correspond to the life situation and life experience of the individual."

In addition to the new introduction – as escort, the present edition also includes a conclusion – as resolution.

The author's observations are to be supplemented by the following acknowledgments:

Emil Schweigler's illustrations were based on indications by Rudolf Steiner.



For the introduction, the following works by Rudolf Steiner are especially relevant: *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity, Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, and *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*. — The metamorphosis of thought, the identity (unity) of the cognizer and the cognized, and the act of doing as the origin of human egohood, these are the archetypal motifs of all culture; see in this connection Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. The following sources may be referred to for the suggestions which are made for meditative use in connection with the reflections on the virtues.

*January*: For the meditation on interrelations of destiny, see the relevant descriptions by Rudolf Steiner in *Theosophy and Occult Science: An Outline*.

*February*: The meditation on keeping silent was taken from the cycle of lectures by Rudolf Steiner, *Human and Cosmic Thought*, Berlin 1914.

*March*: Concerning the meditation on magnanimity suggested here, the *Defences* by Lessing may be called to mind. Lessing established with these a new genus of literature which, to be sure, has produced no successors, probably because no later author might lay claim to a matching combination of magnanimity and originality of thought. Lessing characterized his *Defences* (in the preface to the third and fourth parts of his *Works*) in the following words: "And whom indeed does one think that I have defended? None but dead men who cannot thank me for it. And against whom? Almost solely against the living, who will perhaps make a sour face at me for doing so. If that is clever, I do not know what is to be called rash." The more modestly Lessing might belittle his own cleverness in this respect, the more his noble relationship to truth deserves unreserved

admiration. Lessing's *Defences* are a glorious testimony of his love for creative individuality and his contempt of philistinism which assumes that an injustice is cancelled by the passage of time. Surely no time span, and even if it claims the extent of centuries, can exempt those who come after from nobility of soul and human dignity, or exonerate them from looking back over injustice committed in the past and letting it point a direction for a forward view of their own future action, or relieve them of taking steps that lay their own personality on the scales of justice, particularly not if the consequences of injustice continue to exist and have an effect, exposing uniqueness to the caviling of the perpetually out-of-date, the conspiracy of the mediocre, and the mercilessness of those who mask the shame caused in them by greatness behind their hate.

April: *Lalitawistara*, chapter II; *Luke*, chapter 2, 41 and on.

May: Rudolf Steiner, *The Education of the Child from the Aspect of Spiritual Science*, *The Spiritual Guidance of Man and Mankind*.

June: Rudolf Steiner, *The Christ Impulse in Temporality and Its Effect in Man*, Pforzheim 1914.

July: *John*, chapter 14, 6.

August: *συνγίγνωσκειν* (*syngignoskein*) "Cognizing" is what the ancient Greeks called forgiving.

September: Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, chapter 14.

October: Rudolf Steiner: "This is what we must learn in our time, to live in pure trust, without any existential security, trusting in the ever-present help from the spiritual world" (from a lecture of the year 1919).

November: *Revelations*, chapter 10.

December: Rudolf Steiner, Dornach, December 24, 1918, supplement to the *Calender of the Soul*. Rudolf Steiner gave various forms to the same content, for example:

"If you desire to know your own being,  
Look round you at the world on every side.  
If you truly wish to comprehend the world,  
Look into the depths of your own soul."

(from *Anthroposophical Teachings*, Dornach, March 30, 1924).

Conclusion: Rudolf Steiner, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity, Occult Science: An Outline*.

#### *Preface to the first English edition 1975*

The year is an archetype of becoming and declining. Moreover, since its end is followed by a new beginning, for perception, it forms a circle. The succeeding years proceed through this cycle again and again, whereby the year at the same time becomes an archetype of duration. The sun as the leader of this heavenly round is the awakener and life-giver of all earthly things whose destiny is perpetual transformation. Yet, while the sun bestows its blessings on this transformation and prescribes its laws, for the human eye, it proceeds in its self-enclosed course (and the earth and the other planets follow it) through the fixed stars of the Zodiac. Here again transformation and duration compose the accord of the cosmic symphony.

To very little else does the human soul feel more intimately related than to this web of transience and permanence, of transformation and law. This web forms the tapestry of life on which the earthly events take place. Even those people who develop no imagination concerning the nature of this tapestry unconsciously are affected by the symbol which it presents. Much poetry bears witness to this. But the human soul does not merely repeat what occurs in nature, however profoundly she may be moved by it. She feels herself satisfied only when, out of it, she gives rise to something new.

The rhythm of the year draws all creatures of nature with it, without their being able to oppose it or to change it. The human soul, also, is able to surrender herself to the light of the summer and the darkness of the winter in joy and pain. However, she also is able to experience that the year's events assume a new form (Gestalt) in her innermost being, which will elevate her to a state that goes above and beyond nature. When the soul directs the gaze of her inner observation onto herself, she may notice that the moods of the seasons correspond to twelve attributes of her own being. These attributes, however, do not unfurl, as is the case with creatures of nature, without her own activity. There are twelve stages of development in which she 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 his own soul as a bud which awaits unfolding. The human soul is, of course, even before her self-knowledge and self-transformation, graced with an abundance of potentialities, but these become stunted or even change into their opposites when the treasure which lies hidden in the soul is not nurtured and brought to light.

For this 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 when the year draws to an end. 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 recognizes 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. Or expressed otherwise, the soul-bud illumined by the spirit unfurls to blossom, and this brings forth a fruit in whose maturing, soul and spirit intimately unite. Insofar as the spirit signifies to the soul the star-script of the Ideal, it makes her into a poet of her own true being.

The following contemplations of the Virtues (which initially appeared in the *Star Calendar*, Easter 1969 to Easter 1970, published in Dornach in 1968), are based on brief indications by Rudolf Steiner for meditations which may be practiced in accordance with the changing year. They begin: "Until January 21: Courage becomes redeeming force", and end: "Until December 21: Control of the tongue (speech) becomes feeling for truth". The time of inner

transformation extends respectively from the 21st day of the month to the 21st day of the following month. Since it is a question of transformation and progression, Rudolf Steiner does not enumerate a series of Virtues, but directs us toward 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 Virtues, architects of our own being.

Herbert Witzenmann  
translated by Daisy Aldan