

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Four Noble Truths

Excerpts from *The Gospel of Luke, lectures 2 & 3*

GA 114

The Gospel of Luke

A wonderful passage in the Gospel of St. Luke describes how an Angel appeared to the shepherds in the fields and announced to them that the Saviour of the world was born. Then come the words: 'And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host.' Picture the scene to yourselves: as the shepherds look upwards the heavens open and the Beings of the spiritual world are revealed in sublime pictures.

What was the proclamation to the shepherds? It was clothed in momentous words, words that resounded through the whole of evolution and have become the Christmas message. Rightly rendered, these words would be as follows: **'The Divine Beings manifest themselves from on high, that peace may reign on the Earth below among men who are filled with good will!'** The usual expression, 'glory' is entirely out of place here. The sentence is correct in the form I have now given, and the contrast should be clearly emphasized. What the shepherds saw was the manifestation of spiritual Beings from on high, and the revelation occurred when it did in order that peace might pour into human hearts that were filled with a good will. As we shall see, many mysteries of Christianity are embodied in these words, provided only they are rightly understood. But certain preliminaries are necessary if light is to be thrown on this momentous proclamation. Above all we must endeavour to study the accounts available to clairvoyant faculties from the Akashic Chronicle. With opened eyes of spirit we must contemplate the epoch when Christ Jesus came to humanity, and ask ourselves: What was the historical background and the source of the spiritual impulse poured into Earth evolution at that time?

Currents of spiritual life from many different sides converged and flowed into the evolution of humanity at that point. The very diverse world-conceptions that had arisen in various regions of the Earth in the course of the ages converged in Palestine as though into one central point and came to expression in the events there. We may therefore ask: What are the sources of these streams?

It was indicated yesterday that in the Gospel of St. Luke we have the fruits of Imaginative Cognition^[1], and that this knowledge is gained in the form of *pictures*. In the events just mentioned a picture is placed before us of the manifestation to the shepherds of spiritual Beings from on high: first, the picture is of a spiritual Being, an Angel, who is followed by a 'heavenly host'. Here we must ask: What does a clairvoyant initiated into the mysteries of existence see in this picture — which he can always evoke again at will — when he gazes into the Akashic Chronicle? What was it that was revealed to the shepherds? What was this angelic host, and whence did it come?

This picture portrays one of the great spiritual streams that flowed through the process of evolution, gradually rising higher and higher, until at the time of the events in Palestine its light could shine down upon the Earth only from spiritual heights. From the angelic host revealed to the

shepherds, we are led back, in deciphering the Akashic Chronicle, to one of the greatest streams of spiritual life in the evolution of humanity, a stream which, several centuries before the coming of Christ, spread far and wide in the form of Buddhism. An investigator of the Akashic Chronicle who traces back into previous ages the origin of the revelation to the shepherds, is led, strange as it will seem to you, to the 'Enlightenment' of the great Buddha. The light that shone out in India, setting men's hearts and minds astir as the religion of love and compassion, as a great world-conception, and even to-day is spiritual nourishment for a very large section of humanity — that light appeared again in the revelation to the shepherds! For it too was to stream into the revelation in Palestine. The account given at the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel cannot be understood unless we consider (again from the vantage-point of spiritual-scientific research) the significance of Buddha and what his revelation actually brought about in the course of human evolution.

The Buddha

When Buddha was born in the East, five to six centuries before our era, there appeared in him an Individuality who had lived many times on Earth and in the course of his previous incarnations had already reached the very lofty stage of human development designated by an Oriental expression as that of a 'Bodhisattva'. Some of you have heard lectures on different aspects of the nature of the Bodhisattvas. In the lecture-course *Spiritual Hierarchies and their Reflection in the physical World*, given in Düsseldorf some months ago, I spoke of how the Bodhisattvas are related to the whole of cosmic evolution; in Munich, in the lecture-course *The East in the Light of the West* they were referred to from a different point of view. To-day we shall consider the nature of the Bodhisattvas from still another side and you will gradually perceive the harmony between the single truths.

He who became a Buddha had first to be a Bodhisattva; individual development to the rank of Buddhahood is preceded by the stage of 'Bodhisattva'. We will now think of the nature of the Bodhisattvas in relation to the evolution of humanity considered from the viewpoint of spiritual science.

The capacities and faculties possessed and developed by human beings in any particular epoch were not always in existence. To believe that the same faculties possessed by man to-day were also present in primeval times is due to incapacity and unwillingness to see beyond the present. Man's faculties, everything he is able to accomplish and know, vary from epoch to epoch. His faculties to-day are developed to the point where with his own power of reasoning he is justified in saying: 'I recognize this or that truth by means of my intelligence and my reason; I can recognize what is moral or immoral, logical or illogical in a certain respect. But it would be a mistake to believe that these capacities for distinguishing the logical from the illogical or the moral from the immoral, were always to be found in human nature. They came into existence and developed gradually. What man can accomplish to-day by means of his *own* capacities, he had at one time to be taught — as a child is taught by its parents or teachers — by Beings who though incarnated among men were more highly developed by virtue of their spiritual faculties and could hold converse in the Mysteries with divine-spiritual Beings even loftier than themselves. Individualities who, though themselves incarnated in physical bodies, could have intercourse with still higher, non-incarnated Individualities, existed at all times. For example, before men acquired the faculty of logical thinking by means of which they themselves are able to think logically to-day, they were obliged to learn from certain teachers. These teachers themselves were not able to think logically through faculties developed in the physical body itself, but only through their intercourse in the Mysteries with divine-spiritual Beings in higher realms. Such teachers proclaimed the principles of logic and morality from revelations they received from higher worlds in times before men themselves were able, out of their own earthly nature, to think logically or discover the principles of morality. The Bodhisattvas are one category of Beings who, though incarnated in physical bodies, have inter-course with divine-spiritual Beings in order to bring

down and impart to men what they themselves learn from their divine Teachers. The Bodhisattva is a Being incarnated in a human body, whose faculties enable him to commune with divine-spiritual Beings.

Before Gautama Buddha became a 'Buddha', he was a Bodhisattva, that is to say, an Individuality who, in the Mysteries, was able to commune with higher, divine-spiritual Beings. In remote, primeval ages of Earth evolution, a Being such as the Bodhisattva was entrusted in the higher world with a definite task, a definite mission, which he continues to discharge.

When the Earth was still in early stages of development, even before the Atlantean and Lemurian epochs, the Bodhisattva who was incarnated and became Buddha six hundred years before our era, was assigned a task which he never abandoned. From epoch to epoch, through every age, his work was to impart to Earth evolution as much as the beings concerned enabled it to receive. For each Bodhisattva there comes a time when, with the mission entrusted to him in the primeval past, he reaches a definite point — the point when what he has been able to let flow into humanity 'from above' can become a faculty of man's *own*. A human faculty to-day was once a faculty of divine-spiritual Beings brought down to man from spiritual heights by the Bodhisattvas. Hence there comes a time when a spiritual emissary such as a Bodhisattva can say; 'I have accomplished my mission. Humanity has now received that for which it has been prepared through many, many epochs.' Having reached this point, the Bodhisattva can become 'Buddha'. That is to say, the time has come when he, as a Being with the particular mission to which I have referred, need no longer incarnate in a human physical body; he has incarnated for the last time in such a body and need not incarnate again as a spiritual emissary in the above sense.

This point of time arrived for Gautama Buddha. The task assigned to him had led him again and again down to the Earth; but he appeared in his final incarnation as Bodhisattva when, after his Enlightenment, he became Buddha. He incarnated in a human body that had developed to the highest possible stage those faculties which hitherto had had to be bestowed from above, but were now gradually to become *human* faculties in the fullest sense. When a Bodhisattva has succeeded through his foregoing development in making a human body so perfect that it can itself evolve the faculties connected with his particular mission, he need not incarnate again. He then hovers in spiritual realms, sending his influence into humanity, furthering and guiding human affairs. Henceforth it is the task of men to develop the gifts formerly bestowed upon them from heavenly heights, saying to themselves: 'We must now ourselves develop in a way that will further elaborate the faculties acquired in full measure for the first time in the incarnation when the Bodhisattva became Buddha.'

When the Being who works through successive epochs as Bodhisattva appears as one into whose human nature every faculty that previously flowed down from heavenly heights has been integrated and can now be expressed through him as an *individual* — that Being is a 'Buddha'. All this is revealed by Gautama Buddha. Had he, as Bodhisattva, withdrawn earlier from his mission, men could no longer have been blessed by the bestowal of these faculties from on high. But when evolution had progressed so far that these faculties could be present in a single human being on Earth, the seed was laid that would enable men in the future to develop them in their own natures. Thus the Individuality who, as long as he was a Bodhisattva, did not enter fully into the human form but towered upwards into heavenly heights — this Individuality now for the first time drew completely into human nature and was fully embodied in that one incarnation. But then he again withdrew. For with this incarnation as Buddha a certain quatum of revelations had been given to humanity, thereafter to be developed further in men themselves. Hence the Bodhisattva, having become Buddha, might withdraw from the Earth to spiritual heights, might abide there and guide the affairs of humanity from regions where only a certain power of clairvoyance is able to behold him.

What, then, was the task of that supremely great Individuality usually called the 'Buddha'?

Mankind's Cognitive Faculty

If we want to understand the task and mission of this Buddha in the sense of true esotericism, we must realize the following. The cognitive faculty of mankind has developed gradually. Attention has repeatedly been drawn to the fact that in the Atlantean epoch a large proportion of humanity was clairvoyant and able to gaze into the spiritual worlds, and that certain remnants of this old clairvoyance were still present in post-Atlantean times. After the Atlantean epoch, in the periods of the civilizations of ancient India, Persia, Egypt and Chaldea — even as late as the Graeco-Latin age — there were numbers of human beings, many more than modern man would ever imagine, who possessed the heritage of this old clairvoyance; the astral plane was open to them and they could see into the hidden depths of existence. Perception of man's etheric body was quite usual in the Graeco-Latin age; numbers of people were able to see the human head surrounded by an etheric cloud that has gradually become entirely concealed within the head. But humanity was to advance to a form of knowledge acquired through the outer senses and through the spiritual faculties connected with the senses. Man was gradually to emerge altogether from the spiritual world and to engage in pure sense-observation, in intellectual, logical thinking. By degrees he was to make his way to non-clairvoyant cognition, because he must pass through this stage in order to regain clairvoyant knowledge in the future. But such knowledge will then be united with the fruits of cognition based upon the senses and the intellect.

At the present time we are living in an intermediate period. We look back to a past when man was clairvoyant, and to a future when this will again be the case. In our present age the majority of human beings are dependent upon what they perceive with their senses and grasp with their intellect. There are, of course, certain heights even in sensory perception and in knowledge yielded by the intellect and reasoning mind; everywhere there are 'degrees of knowledge'. One person in a certain incarnation passes through his existence on Earth with little insight into what is moral, and little compassion for his fellow-men. We say of him that he is at a low stage of morality. Another passes through life with very slightly developed intellectual capacities; we call him a person of low intelligence. But these powers of intellectual cognition are capable of rising to a very lofty level. A man whom, in Fichte's sense, we call a 'moral genius' reaches the highest level of moral Imagination but there are many intermediate stages. Without possessing clairvoyant faculties we can reach this height only by ennobling powers that are at the disposal of ordinary humanity. These stages had to be attained by man in the course of Earth evolution. What man knows to-day to a certain extent through his own intelligence and also what he attains through his own moral strength, namely the consciousness that he must have compassion with the sufferings and sorrows of others — this consciousness could not have been acquired by a human being in primeval times through his own efforts. It can be said to-day that such insight is unfolded by a healthy moral sense, even without clairvoyance, and to an increasing extent men will come to realize not only that compassion is the very highest virtue but that without love humanity can make no progress.

Man's moral sense will grow steadily stronger. But there were epochs in the past when he would never have understood by himself that compassion and love belong to a very high stage of development. It was therefore necessary for spiritual Beings such as the Bodhisattvas to incarnate in human forms. Revelations of the power of compassion and love came to such Beings from the higher worlds and they were able to teach men how to act accordingly. What men have come to recognize to-day through their *own* powers as the lofty virtues of compassion and love — this had to be taught, through epoch after epoch, from heavenly heights.

Bodhisattva to Buddha

The Teacher of love and compassion in times when men themselves did not yet realize the nature of those virtues was the Bodhisattva who incarnated for the last time as Gautama Buddha. Buddha was formerly the Bodhisattva, the Teacher of love and compassion. He was the Teacher throughout the epochs just referred to, when men still possessed a certain natural clairvoyance. As Bodhisattva he incarnated in bodies endowed with powers of clairvoyance. Then, when he became Buddha and looked back into these previous incarnations, he could describe the experiences of his inmost soul when it gazed into the depths of existence hidden behind sense-phenomena. He possessed this faculty in previous embodiments and was born with it into the family of Sakya from which his father, Suddhodana, descended. When Gautama was born he was still a Bodhisattva, that is to say he came at the stage of development reached in his previous incarnations. He who is usually called the 'Buddha' was born to his father Suddhodana and his mother Mayadevi as a Bodhisattva and possessed the faculty of clairvoyance in a high degree even as a child. He was always able to gaze into the depths of existence.

Let us realize that in the course of human evolution this capacity to gaze into the depths of existence has assumed very definite forms. It was the mission of humanity in earthly evolution to allow the old, dim clairvoyance gradually to die away; vestiges that persisted did not, therefore, retain the best elements of that ancient faculty. The best elements were the first to be lost. What remained was often a lower form of vision of the astral world, a vision of those demonic forces which drag man's instincts and passions to a lower level. Through Initiation we can look into the spiritual world and perceive forces and beings that are connected with the finest thoughts and sentiments of men, but we also perceive the spiritual powers behind unbridled passions, sensuality, consuming egoism. The vestiges of clairvoyance in the majority of human beings — it was different, of course, in the Initiates — led to vision of these wild, demonic powers behind the lower human passions. Whoever is able to see into the spiritual world can of course perceive all this himself; true vision depends upon the development of human faculties. But the one vision cannot be attained without the other.

As a Bodhisattva the Buddha had been obliged to incarnate in a body constituted as other human bodies were at that time. The body in which he incarnated provided him with the power to look deeply into the astral substrata of existence and even as a child he was able to perceive all the astral forces underlying the unbridled passions of men, their consuming lusts and sensuality. He had been protected from witnessing physical depravity in the outer world, with its accompanying sufferings and sorrows. Confined to his father's palace, shielded from every unpleasant experience, he was indulged and pampered in a way considered fitting for his rank. But this seclusion only enhanced his power of vision, and while he was carefully protected and everything indicative of pain and sickness hidden from him, his eyes of spirit were able to gaze at the astral pictures hovering around him of all the wild, degrading passions of men. Whoever can read the external biography of Buddha with genuine esoteric insight will surmise this. It must be emphasized that in exoteric accounts there is often a great deal that cannot be understood without knowledge of the esoteric foundations — and this applies very particularly to the life of Buddha.

It must seem strange to Orientalists and others who study the life of Buddha to read that he was surrounded in the palace by 'forty thousand dancing-girls and eighty-four thousand women'. That statement is to be found in books sold to-day for a few shillings and the writers are obviously not particularly astonished at the existence of such a harem! What is the explanation? It is not realized that this points to the intensity of the experiences that arose in Buddha through his astral visions. Guarded from childhood against all knowledge of sorrow and suffering in the world of physical humanity, he perceived everything as spiritual forces in the spiritual world. He saw all this because he

was born into a body such as could be produced at that time; but from the outset he was proof against the delusive pictures around him, having in his previous incarnations risen to the height of a Bodhisattva. Because in this incarnation he was living as the Bodhisattva he felt impelled to go out into the world in order to see the things indicated by the pictures appearing in the astral world around him in the palace. Every picture kindled within him an urge to go out and see the world, to leave his prison. That was the impelling urge in his soul, for as Bodhisattva there was in him the lofty spiritual power connected with the mission of imparting to mankind the teaching of compassion and love, with all its implications. Hence it was necessary for him to become acquainted with humanity in the world in which man can assimilate this teaching through moral insight. Buddha was to acquire knowledge of the life of humanity in the physical world. From Bodhisattva he was to become Buddha — as a man among men. The only possibility of achieving this was to abandon all the faculties that had remained to him from his former incarnations and to turn outwards to the physical plane in order to live there among men as a model, an ideal, an example to humanity of the development of these qualities.

Naturally, many intermediate stages are necessary before an advance from the stage of Bodhisattva to that of Buddha can be accomplished in this sense. Such an advance does not take place from one day to the next.

Buddha felt impelled to leave the palace. The story is that on one occasion he escaped from his royal prison and came across an aged man. Hitherto he had been surrounded only by the spectacle of exuberant youth, in order to induce him to believe that nothing else existed. Now, in the old man, he encountered the phenomenon of advanced age on the physical plane. Then he came across a sick man; then he saw a corpse — the manifestation of death on the physical plane. All this came before him. The legend — here once again truer than any external account — goes on to relate something very indicative of Buddha's essential nature: that when he left the palace, the horse by which he was drawn was so saddened by his decision to forsake everything that had surrounded him since his birth that it died of grief and was transported as a spiritual being into the spiritual world. — A profound truth is expressed here. It would lead too far for me to explain why a horse is taken as a symbol for a spiritual power of man. I will only remind you of Plato, who speaks of a horse led by a bridle when he is using a symbol for certain human capacities that are still bestowed from above and have not been developed by man from his own inmost self. When Buddha departed from the palace he relinquished these faculties, left them in the spiritual world whence they had always guided him. This is indicated in the picture of the horse which dies of grief and is transported into the spiritual world. But it was only gradually that Buddha could attain the rank he was destined to reach in his final incarnation on the Earth. He had first to learn on the physical plane everything that as Bodhisattva he had known only through spiritual vision.

To begin with he encountered two teachers, the one an exponent of the ancient Indian world-conception known as the Sankhya philosophy, the other an exponent of the Yoga philosophy. Buddha steeped himself in what they expounded to him. No matter how exalted a being may be, he has to become acquainted with the external achievements of humanity and although a Bodhisattva may learn more quickly, he must learn none the less. If the Bodhisattva who lived six hundred years before our era were born to-day, he would still, like a child at school, first have to learn about happenings on Earth while he was still in spiritual heights. It was essential that Buddha too, should have knowledge of what had been accomplished since his previous incarnation.

He learnt the principles of the Sankhya philosophy from the one teacher and of the Yoga philosophy from the other, thereby acquiring a certain insight into world-conceptions which solved the riddles of life for many in those days, and into their effect upon the souls of men. In the Sankhya philosophy he was able to assimilate an intricate system of logical thought, but the more he

familiarized himself with it, the less did it satisfy him, until finally it seemed to him to be utterly devoid of life. He realized that he must seek elsewhere than in the traditional Sankhya philosophy for the sources of what it was his task to achieve in this incarnation.

The second system was the Yoga philosophy of Patanjali, which sought to establish connection with the Divine through certain processes in the life of the soul. Buddha devoted deep study to the Yoga philosophy as well; he assimilated it, made it part of his very being. But it too left him unsatisfied, for he perceived that it was something that had simply been handed down from ancient time. Human beings were meant, however, to acquire different faculties, to achieve moral development *themselves*. Having put the Yoga philosophy to the test in his own soul, Buddha realized that it could not satisfy the needs of his mission.

He then came into the neighbourhood of five ascetics who had striven to approach the mysteries of existence by the path of severest self-discipline, mortification and privation. Having tested this path too, Buddha was again obliged to admit that it would not satisfy the needs of his mission at that time. For a certain period he underwent all the privations and mortifications practised by the monks. He starved as they did, in order to eliminate greed and thereby evoke deeper forces which come into action when the body is weakened and then, rising up from the depths of the bodily nature, can lead a man rapidly into the spiritual world. But the stage of development he had reached enabled Buddha to perceive the futility of this mortification, fasting and starvation. Because he was a Bodhisattva, his development in previous incarnations had enabled him to bring the physical body to the highest pitch of perfection possible in that age. Hence he could experience what any man must experience when he takes this particular path into the spiritual world. Whoever pursues the Sankhya or Yoga philosophy to a certain point without having developed in himself what Buddha had previously acquired, whoever aspires to scale the pure heights of Divine Spirit through logical thinking without having first gained the requisite moral strength, will be subjected to temptation by the demon Mara. This ordeal was undergone by Buddha as a test. At this point the human being is beset by all the devils of pride, vanity and ambition, as was Buddha when Mara stood before him. But having previously reached the lofty stage of Bodhisattva, he recognized the demon and was proof against him. Buddha could say to himself: If men continue to develop along the old path, without the new impulse contained in the teaching of compassion and love, they are bound, not being Bodhisattvas, to fall prey to the demon Mara, who pours all the forces of pride and vanity into their souls.

This was what Buddha experienced when he had worked through the Sankhya and Yoga philosophies, following them to their final conclusions. While he was with the monks, however, he had had an experience in which the demon assumed a different form, one in which he arrays before the human being an abundance of external, physical possessions — 'the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them' — in order to divert him from the spiritual world. Buddha found that this temptation comes precisely on the path of mortification, for the demon Mara approached him, saying: 'Be not misled into abandoning everything that was yours as a king's son; return to the royal palace!' Another man would have yielded to what was then presented to him, but Buddha's development was such that he could see through the tempter and his aim, could perceive what would befall humanity if men lived on as hitherto and chose the path of hunger and mortification as the only means of ascent into the spiritual world. Being himself proof against this temptation he could disclose to men the great danger that would threaten them if they chose to penetrate into the spiritual world simply by means of fasting and external measures of the kind, without the foundation of an active moral sense.

Thus while still a Bodhisattva, Buddha had advanced to those two boundary-points in development which a man who is not a Bodhisattva had better avoid altogether. Translating this into words of ordinary parlance, we may say: 'The highest knowledge is full of glory and of beauty. But see that you approach this knowledge with a clean heart, noble purpose and purified soul — otherwise the

devil of pride, vanity and ambition will seize you!' The second teaching is this: 'Strive not to enter the spiritual world by any external path, through mortification or fasting, until you have purified your moral sense — otherwise the tempter will approach you from the other side!' — These are the two teachings whose light shines from Buddha into our own age. While still a Bodhisattva he revealed the essential purpose of his mission — which was to impart the moral sense to humanity in an age when men were not yet capable of unfolding it out of their own hearts. Thus when he realized the dangers of asceticism for mankind he left the five monks and went to a place where, by an intense deepening of those faculties of human nature which can be developed without the old clairvoyance, without any capacity inherited from earlier times, he achieved the highest perfection that it will ever be possible for mankind to achieve by means of these faculties.

In the twenty-ninth year of his life, after having abandoned the path of asceticism, there dawned upon Buddha during his seven days of meditation under the 'Bodhi-tree' the great Truths that can flash up in a man when, in deep contemplation, he strives to discover what his own faculties can impart to him. There dawned upon Buddha the great teachings he then proclaimed as the *Four Truths* and the doctrine of compassion and love presented as the *Eightfold Path*. We shall be considering these teachings of Buddha later on. At the moment it will be sufficient to say that they are a kind of portrayal of the moral sense and of the purest doctrine of compassion and love. They arose when, under the 'Bodhi-tree', the Bodhisattva of India became Buddha. The teaching of compassion and love came into existence then for the first time in the history of mankind in the form of *human faculties* which man has since been able to develop from his own very self. That is the essential point. Therefore shortly before his death Buddha said to his disciples: 'Grieve not that the Master is departing. I am leaving with you the Law of Wisdom and the Law of Discipline. For the future they will serve as substitutes for the Master.' These words mean simply: Hitherto the *Bodhisattva* has taught you what is expressed in the Law; now, having fulfilled his incarnation on Earth, he may withdraw. For men will absorb into their own hearts the teaching of the Bodhisattva and from their own hearts will be able to develop this teaching as the religion of compassion and love. That was what came to pass in India when, after seven days of inner contemplation, the Bodhisattva became Buddha; and that was what he taught in diverse forms to the pupils who were around him. The actual forms in which he gave his teaching will still have to be considered.

The Path to Christianity

It was necessary for us to-day to look back to what happened six hundred years before our era because we shall neither understand the path of Christianity nor what is indicated about that path, above all by the writer of the Gospel of St. Luke, unless we follow evolution backwards from the events in Palestine to the Sermon at Benares. Since Buddha attained that rank there was no need for him to return to the Earth; since then he has been a spiritual Being, living in the spiritual world and participating in everything that has transpired on Earth. When the greatest of all happenings on the Earth was about to come to pass, there appeared to the shepherds in the fields a Being from spiritual heights who made the proclamation recorded in the Gospel of St. Luke. Then, together with the Angel, there suddenly appeared a 'heavenly host'. The 'heavenly host' was the picture of the *glorified Buddha*, seen by the shepherds in vision; he was the Bodhisattva of ancient times, the Being in his spiritual form who for thousands and thousands of years had brought to men the message of compassion and love. Now, after his last incarnation on the Earth, he soared in spiritual heights and appeared to the shepherds together with the Angel who had announced to them the Event of Palestine.

These are the findings of spiritual investigation. It was the Bodhisattva of old who now, in the glory of Buddhahood, appeared to the shepherds. From the Akashic Chronicle we learn that in Palestine, in the 'City of David', a child was born to parents descended from the priestly line of the

House of David. This child — I say it with emphasis — born of parents of whom the father at any rate was descended from the priestly line of the House of David, was to be shone upon from the very day of birth by the power radiating from Buddha in the spiritual world. We look with the shepherds into the manger where 'Jesus of Nazareth', as he is usually called, was born, and see the radiance above the little child; we know that in this picture is expressed the power of the Bodhisattva who became Buddha — the power that had formerly streamed to men and, working now upon humanity from the spiritual world, accomplished its greatest deed by shedding its lustre upon the child born at Bethlehem.

When the Individuality whose power now rayed down from spiritual heights upon the child of parents belonging to David's line was born in India long ago — when the Buddha to be was born as Bodhisattva — the whole momentous significance of the events described to-day was revealed to a sage living at that time, and what he beheld in the spiritual world caused that sage — Asita was his name — to go to the royal palace to look for the little Bodhisattva-child. When he saw the babe he foretold his mighty mission as Buddha, predicting, to the father's dismay, that the child would not rule over his kingdom, but would become a Buddha. Then Asita began to weep, and when asked whether misfortune threatened the child, he answered: 'No, I am weeping because I am so old that I shall not live to see the day when this Saviour, the Bodhisattva, will walk the Earth as Buddha!' Asita did not live to see the Bodhisattva become Buddha and there was good reason for his grief at that time. But the same Asita who had seen the Bodhisattva as a babe in the palace of King Suddhodana, was born again as the personality who, in the Gospel of St. Luke, is referred to as Simeon in the scene of the presentation in the temple. We are told that Simeon was inspired by the Spirit to go into the temple where the child was brought to him [Luke 2:25-32](#)^[2]. Simeon was the same being who, as Asita, had wept because in that incarnation he would not be able to see the Bodhisattva attaining Buddhahood. But it was granted to him to witness the further stage in the development of this Individuality, and having 'the Holy Spirit upon him' he was able to perceive, at the presentation in the temple, the radiance of the glorified Bodhisattva above the head of the Jesus-child of the House of David. Then he could say to himself: 'Now you need no longer grieve, for what you did not live to see at that earlier time, you now behold: the glory of the Saviour shining above this babe. Lord, now let thy servant die in peace!'

Above source: <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA114/English/RSP1964/19090916p01.html>

Buddhism Raised to a Higher Level

Whoever turns to the Gospel of St. Luke will, to begin with, only be able to feel dimly something of what it contains; but an inkling will then dawn on him that whole worlds, vast spiritual worlds, are revealed by this Gospel. After what was said in the last lecture, this will be obvious to us, for as we heard, spiritual research shows how the Buddhistic world-conception, with everything it was able to give to mankind, flowed into the Gospel of St. Luke. It may truly be said that Buddhism radiates from this Gospel, but in a special form, comprehensible to the simplest and most unsophisticated mind.

As could be gathered from the last lecture and will become particularly clear to-day, to understand Buddhism as presented to the world in the teachings of the great Buddha demands the application of lofty conceptions and an ascent to the pure, ethereal heights of the Spirit; a very great deal of preparation is required to grasp the essence of Buddhism. Its spiritual substance is contained in the Gospel of St. Luke in a form that can influence everyone who recognizes concepts and ideas that are essential for humanity. This will be readily understood when we get to the root of the mystery underlying the Gospel of St. Luke. Not only are the spiritual attainments of Buddhism presented to us through this Gospel; they come before us in an even nobler form, as though raised to a level higher than when they were a gift to humanity in India some six hundred years before our era.

In the lecture yesterday we spoke of Buddhism as the purest teaching of compassion and love; from the place in the world where Buddha worked a gospel of love and compassion streamed into the whole spiritual evolution of the Earth. The gospel of love and compassion lives in the true Buddhist when his own heart feels the suffering confronting him in the outer world from all living creatures. There we encounter Buddhistic love and compassion in the fullest sense of the words; but from the Gospel of St. Luke there streams to us something that is more than this all-embracing love and compassion. It might be described as the translation of love and compassion into *deed*. Compassion in the highest sense of the word is the ideal of the Buddhist; the aim of one who lives according to the message of the Gospel of St. Luke is to unfold love that *acts*. The true Buddhist can himself share in the sufferings of the sick; from the Gospel of St. Luke comes the call to take active steps to do whatever is possible to bring about healing. Buddhism helps us to understand everything that stirs the human soul; the Gospel of St. Luke calls upon us to abstain from passing judgment, to do *more* than is done to us, to give *more* than we receive! Although in this Gospel there is the purest, most genuine Buddhism, love translated into deed must be regarded as a progression, a sublimation, of Buddhism.

This aspect of Christianity — Buddhism raised to a higher level — could be truly described only by one possessed of the heart and disposition of the writer of the Gospel of St. Luke. It was eminently possible for him to portray Christ Jesus as the Healer of body and soul because having himself worked as a physician he was able to write in the way that appealed so deeply to the hearts of men. That he recorded what he had to say about Christ Jesus from the standpoint of a physician will become more and more apparent as we penetrate into the depths of the Gospel.

But something else strikes us when we consider what an impression this Gospel can make upon even the most childlike natures. The lofty teachings of Buddhism, to understand which mature intelligence is required, appear to us in the Gospel of St. Luke as though rejuvenated, as though born anew from a fountain of youth. Buddhism is a fruit on the tree of humanity, and when we find it again in this Gospel it seems to be like a rejuvenation of what it had previously been. It is only possible to understand this rejuvenation by paying close attention to the great Buddha's teachings themselves and discerning with spiritual eyes the powers working in Buddha's soul.

In the first place it must be remembered that the Buddha had been a Bodhisattva, that is to say, a very lofty Being able to gaze deeply into the mysteries of existence. As a Bodhisattva, the Buddha had participated in the evolution of humanity throughout the ages. When in the epoch following Atlantis the first post-Atlantean civilization was established and promoted, Buddha was already present as Bodhisattva and, acting as an intermediary, conveyed to man from the spiritual worlds the teachings indicated in the lecture yesterday. He had been present in Atlantean and even in Lemurian times. And because he had reached such a high stage of development, he was also able, during the twenty-nine years of his final existence as Bodhisattva, from his birth to the moment when he became Buddha, to recollect stage by stage all the communities in which he had lived before incarnating for the last time in India. He could look back upon his participation in the labours of humanity, upon his existence in the divine-spiritual worlds in order that he might bring down from there what it was his mission to impart to mankind. It was indicated yesterday that even an Individuality of this lofty rank must live through again, briefly at any rate, what he has already learnt. Thus Buddha describes how while still a Bodhisattva he gradually rose to higher stages of consciousness, how his spiritual vision became ever more perfect and his enlightenment complete.

We are told how he described to his disciples the path his soul had traversed and how he was able by degrees to recollect his experiences in the past. He spoke to them somewhat as follows. 'There was a time, O ye monks, when an all-pervading light appeared to me from the spiritual world, but as yet I could distinguish nothing in it — neither forms, nor pictures: my enlightenment was not yet pure

enough. Then I began to see not only the light, but single pictures, single forms, within the light; but I could not distinguish what these forms and pictures denoted: my enlightenment was not yet pure enough. Then I began to realize that spiritual beings were expressing themselves in these forms and pictures; but again I could not distinguish to what kingdoms of the spiritual world these beings belonged: my enlightenment was not yet pure enough. Then I learnt to know to which of the various kingdoms of the spiritual world these several beings belonged; but I could not yet distinguish through what actions they had acquired their place in the spiritual realms, nor what was their condition of soul: for my enlightenment was not yet pure enough. Then came the time when I could discern through what actions these spiritual beings had acquired their place in the spiritual realms, and what was their condition of soul; but I could not yet distinguish with which particular spiritual beings I myself had lived in former times, nor how I was related to them: for my enlightenment was not yet pure enough. Then came the time when I was able to know that I was together with certain beings in particular epochs and was related to them in this way or in that: I knew what my previous lives had been. Now my enlightenment was pure!

In this way Buddha indicated to his disciples how he had gradually worked his way to knowledge which, although he had already attained it in an earlier epoch, had nevertheless to be freshly acquired in accordance with the conditions prevailing in each successive incarnation. In Buddha's case this knowledge had necessarily to be in a form in keeping with his complete descent into a physical human body. If we enter into these things with the right feeling we shall get an inkling of the greatness and significance of the Individuality who incarnated at that time in the King's son of the family of Sakya. Buddha knew that the world he himself could again experience and behold would be inaccessible to men's ordinary faculty of vision in the immediate present and future. Only 'Initiates' — and Buddha himself was an Initiate — could gaze into the spiritual world; for normal humanity this was no longer possible. Inherited remains of the old clairvoyance had become increasingly rare. But Buddha had not come to speak to men only of what Initiates had to say; his primary mission was to convey to them knowledge of the forces that must flow *out of the human soul itself*. Hence he could not speak only of the fruits of his own enlightenment, but he said to himself: 'I must speak to men of what they can attain through the higher development of their *own inner nature* and of the faculties belonging to this epoch.

In the course of Earth evolution men will gradually come to recognize the content of Buddha's teaching as something that their own reason, their own soul, tells them. But long, long ages will have to pass before all men are mature enough to produce *out of their own souls* what Buddha was the first to bring to expression in the form of pure knowledge. For to develop certain faculties in later ages is not the same as to bring them forth for the first time from the depths of the human soul. Let us take another example. To-day, even the young are able to assimilate the principles of logic and unfold logical thinking. Logical thinking is now one of the general faculties possessed by man and developed from his own inner nature. But it was in Aristotle, the great Greek thinker, that this faculty first arose from a human soul. There is a difference between bringing forth something for the first time from the soul and bringing it forth after it has already been developing for a period in humanity.

Buddha's message to men was among the very greatest of teachings and will remain so for long, long ages. Hence the soul of a Bodhisattva, the soul of one enlightened to such a supreme degree, was needed in order that this teaching should for the first time become a living power in a human being. Only the highest degree of enlightenment could enable the soul to give birth to what was to become a universal endowment of mankind — namely, the lofty doctrine of compassion and love. Buddha's message had to be presented in words familiar to the humanity of that time, especially to the people of his homeland. Reference has already been made to the fact that at the time of Buddha the Sankhya and Yoga philosophies were being taught in India. From them were derived the terminologies and concepts in use at the time. Anyone who brought a new message had necessarily

to use current parlance, and Buddha too clothed what was living within him in concepts familiar to his contemporaries. True, he re-cast these concepts into completely new forms but he was obliged to use them. The principle of all evolution must be that the future is based on the past. And so Buddha clothed his sublime wisdom in expressions customary in the Indian teachings of that time.

We must now try to picture what Buddha experienced during the seven-day period of his 'Enlightenment' under the Bodhi-tree. This teaching was to become the deepest, most intimate concern of mankind. Let us therefore try to conceive, even if with thoughts only approximately adequate, what profound experiences were undergone by Buddha under the Bodhi-tree and then came to expression in his soul.

He might have said that there were times in the ancient past when many human beings were dimly clairvoyant and that in an even more distant past this was the case with everyone. What does it mean — to be 'dimly clairvoyant', or 'clairvoyant'? To be clairvoyant means to be able to use the organs of the *etheric body*. When a man is able to use the organs of his astral body only, he can, it is true, inwardly feel and experience profound mysteries, but there can be no actual vision. Clairvoyance cannot arise until what is experienced in the astral body makes its 'impress' in the etheric body. Even the old, dim clairvoyance originated from the fact that in the etheric body, which had not yet passed completely into the physical body, there were organs which it was still possible for ancient humanity to use. What, therefore, was it that men lost in the course of time? They lost the capacity to use the organs of the etheric body! They were obliged to make use of the external organs of the physical body only, experiencing in the astral body, in the form of thoughts, feelings and mental pictures, what the physical body transmitted. All this passed through the soul of the great Buddha as the expression of what he experienced. He said to himself: 'Men have lost the capacity to use the organs of their etheric bodies. They experience in their astral bodies what they learn from the outer world through the instrumentality of their physical bodies.'

Buddha now concerned himself with this significant question: 'When the eye perceives the colour red, when the ear hears a sound, a tone, when the sense of taste has received some impression, under normal conditions these impressions become concepts and ideas, are inwardly experienced in the astral body. If they were experienced in this way alone, they could not, in normal circumstances, be accompanied by pain and suffering. Were man simply to abandon himself to the impressions of the outer world as the latter with its light, colours, sounds, and so forth, affects his senses, he would pass through the world without experiencing pain and suffering from the impressions made upon him. Only under certain conditions can pain and suffering be experienced by man.'

Lucifer and Ahriman

Hence the great Buddha sought to discover the conditions under which man experiences pain, suffering, cares and afflictions. When and why do the impressions of the outer world become fraught with suffering? Then he said to himself: Looking back into ancient times, it is revealed that in men's earlier incarnations on the Earth certain beings worked into their astral bodies from two sides. In the course of incarnations through the epochs of Lemuria and Atlantis, the Luciferic beings penetrated into human nature, and their influences took actual effect in the human astral body. Then, from the Atlantean epoch onwards, man was also worked upon by beings under the leadership of Ahriman. Thus in the course of his earlier incarnations, man was subjected to the influences of both the Luciferic and Ahrimanic beings. Had these beings not worked upon him, he could have acquired neither freedom nor the capacity to distinguish between good and evil, nor free will. From a higher point of view, therefore, it is fortunate that these influences were exercised upon him, although it is true that in a certain respect they led him from divine-spiritual heights more deeply into material existence than he would otherwise have descended.

The great Buddha could therefore say that man bears within himself influences due to the invasion of Lucifer on the one side and Ahriman on the other. These influences have remained with him from earlier incarnations. When, with his old clairvoyance, man was still able to gaze into the spiritual world, he perceived the influences of Lucifer and Ahriman and could clearly distinguish them. He could say: This particular influence comes from Lucifer, this other from Ahriman. And inasmuch as with his vision of the astral world he perceived the harmful influences of Lucifer and Ahriman, he could reckon with and protect himself from them. He knew too, how he had come into contact with these Beings. There was a time — so said Buddha — when men knew whence came the influences they had borne within themselves from incarnation to incarnation since bygone ages. But with the loss of the old clairvoyance this knowledge was also lost; man is now ignorant of the influences that have worked upon his soul through the series of incarnations. The earlier clairvoyant knowledge has been replaced by ignorance. Darkness now envelops man; he cannot perceive whence come these influences of Lucifer and Ahriman, but they are there within him! He has within him something of which he knows nothing. It would be folly to deny the reality and effectiveness of something that exists, even though people are ignorant of it. The influences that have penetrated into man from incarnation to incarnation are working in him. They are there and they work through his whole life — only he is unaware of them!

What effect have these influences in man? Although he cannot actually recognize them for what they are, he feels them; there is a power within him that is the expression of what has continued from incarnation to incarnation and has entered into his present form of existence. These forces, the nature of which man cannot recognize, are represented by his desire for external life, for experience in the world, by his thirst and craving for life. Thus the ancient Luciferic and Ahrimanic influences work within man as the thirst, the craving for existence. This 'thirst for existence' continues from incarnation to incarnation. This, in effect, is what the great Buddha said. But to his intimate pupils he gave more detailed explanations.

How he presented what he thus felt can be understood only if there has been a certain preparation through Anthroposophy. We know that when a man dies his astral body and his Ego leave the physical and etheric bodies. Then he has before him, for a certain time, the great memory-tableau of his last life in the form of a vast picture. The main part of his etheric body is then cast off as a second corpse and something like an extract or essence of this etheric body remains; he bears this extract with him through the periods of Kamaloka and Devachan and brings it back again into his next incarnation. While he is in Kamaloka there is inscribed into this life-extract everything he has experienced through his deeds, everything that has been incurred in the way of human Karma and for which he has to make compensation. All this unites with the extract of the etheric body which passes on from one incarnation to another and man brings it with him when he again comes into existence through birth. The term in Oriental literature for what we call 'etheric body' is 'Linga Sharira'. Thus it is an extract of Linga Sharira that man takes with him from incarnation to incarnation.

Linga Sharira (Etheric Body)

Buddha was able to say: At birth, the human being brings with him, in his Linga Sharira, everything it contains from his former incarnations; it is inscribed there everything of which man, in the present epoch, knows nothing and over which spreads the darkness of ignorance, although it asserts itself as the 'thirst for existence', the 'craving for life'. In what is called the 'craving for life', Buddha saw everything that comes from previous incarnations and drives man to long avidly for enjoyment in the world, so that he does not merely move through the world of colours, tones and other impressions, but yearns for this world. This force exists in man from previous incarnations. Buddha's pupils called it 'Samskara'. Buddha spoke to his intimate pupils to the following effect. —

What is characteristic of man is his ignorance, his 'non-perception' of something very significant that is in him. Because of this ignorance, this non-perception, everything that confronts man from the Luciferic and Ahrimanic beings and to which he might otherwise adopt an effective attitude, is transformed into the 'thirst for existence', into slumbering forces which rumble darkly within him from previous incarnations. Man's present thinking has developed from 'Samskara' and this is why, in the present cycle of human evolution, nobody is able, without further effort, to think objectively.

Mark well the fine distinction made clear by Buddha to his pupils: the distinction between objective thinking which has nothing but the 'object' in view, and thinking influenced by the forces arising from the Linga Sharira. Consider how you acquire your 'opinions' about things; ask yourselves how much you acquire from these things because they please you and how much because you observe them objectively. Everything acquired as an apparent truth, not as the result of objective thinking, but because old inclinations have been brought from previous incarnations — all this, according to Buddha, forms an 'inner organ of thought'. This organ of thought comprises the sum-total of what a man thinks because certain experiences in former incarnations remain in his Linga Sharira as a residue. Buddha saw in the inner being of man a kind of inner organ of thought formed from Samskara, and he said: 'It is this thought-substance that forms in man what is called his 'present individuality' — in Buddhism, 'Name and Form', or 'Kamarupa'. 'Ahamkara' is the term used in another philosophy.

Buddha spoke to his pupils somewhat as follows. In primeval times, when men were still clairvoyant and beheld the world lying behind physical existence, they all, in a certain sense, saw the same, for the objective world is the same for everyone. But when the darkness of ignorance spread over the world, each man brought with him individual capacities which distinguished him from his fellows. This made him into a being best described as having a particular form of soul. Each human being had a name which distinguished him from another — each had an 'Ahamkara'. What is thus created in man's inner nature under the influence of what he has brought with him from former incarnations and accounts for his 'Name and Form', his individuality — this builds in him, from within outwards, Manas and the five sense-organs, the so-called '*six organs*'.

Note well that Buddha did not say: 'The eye is merely formed from within outwards'; but he said: 'Something that was in Linga Sharira and has been brought over from previous stages of existence is membered into the eye.' Hence the eye does not see with pure, unclouded vision; it would look into the world of outer existence quite differently if it were not inwardly permeated with the residue of earlier stages of existence. Hence the ear does not hear with full clarity but everything is dimmed by this residue. The result is that there is mingled into all things the desire to see this or that, to hear this or that, to taste or perceive in one way or another. Into everything man encounters in the present cycle of existence there is insinuated what has remained from earlier incarnations as 'desire'. If this element of desire were absent — so said Buddha — man would look out into the world as a divine being; he would let the world work upon him and no longer desire anything more than is granted to him, nor wish his knowledge to exceed what was bestowed upon him by the divine Powers; he would make no distinction between himself and the outer world, but would feel himself membered into it. He feels himself separated from the rest of the world only because he craves for more and different enjoyment than the world voluntarily offers him. This leads to the consciousness that he is different from the world. If he were satisfied with what is in the world, he would not distinguish himself from it; he would feel his own existence continuing in the outer world. He would never experience what is called 'contact' with the outer world, for, not being separate from it, he could not come into 'contact' with it. The forming of the 'six organs' was responsible for the gradual establishment of 'contact with the outer world'; contact gave rise to *feeling* and feeling to the urge to cling to the outer world. But it is because man tries to cling to the outer world that pain, suffering, cares and afflictions arise.

This is what Buddha taught his pupils regarding the 'inner man' as the cause of pain, suffering, cares and afflictions. It was a delicately woven, sublime theory — but a theory that sprang directly from life, for an 'Enlightened One' had experienced it as a profound truth concerning the humanity of his time. Having guided humanity as Bodhisattva for thousands and thousands of years in accordance with the principles of love and compassion, there dawned in him when he became Buddha, knowledge of the true nature and the causes of suffering. He was able to know why man suffers, and explained this to his intimate disciples. And when his development was so advanced that he could experience the very essence and meaning of human existence in the present cycle of evolution, he summarized it all in the famous sermon at Benares with which he inaugurated his work as Buddha. There he presented in a popular form what he had previously communicated to his disciples in a more intimate way.

The Four Noble Truths

He spoke somewhat as follows. — Whoever knows the causes of human existence, realizes that life, as it is, must be fraught with suffering. The first teaching I have to give you concerns **(1) suffering in the world**. The second teaching concerns the **(2) causes of suffering**. Wherein do these causes lie? They lie in the fact that the thirst for existence insinuates itself into man from what has remained in him from previous incarnations. *Thirst for existence* is the cause of suffering. The third teaching concerns the question: **(3) How is suffering eliminated from the world?** By eliminating its cause; by extinguishing the thirst for existence proceeding from ignorance! Men have lost their former clairvoyant knowledge, have become ignorant, and it is this ignorance that conceals the spiritual world from them. Ignorance is to blame for the thirst for existence and this in turn is the cause of suffering and pain, cares and afflictions. Thirst for existence must disappear from the world if suffering is to disappear. The old knowledge has passed away from the world; men can no longer use the organs of the etheric body. But a *new knowledge* is now possible, the knowledge acquired when man immerses himself completely in what his *astral body*, thanks to its deepest forces, can give him, and with the help of what his outer sense-organs enable him to observe in the external physical world. What is thus kindled in the deepest forces of the astral body and is developed with the co-operation of the physical body — although not actually derived from it — this alone can help man to begin with, and give him knowledge; for this knowledge is at first bestowed upon him as a gift. It was to this effect that Buddha spoke in his great inaugural sermon.

He knew that he must transmit to humanity the kind of knowledge that is attainable through the highest development of the forces of the astral body. Hence he had to teach that through deep and penetrating understanding of the forces of the astral body, man acquires knowledge that is both appropriate and possible for him but is at the same time untouched by influences from earlier incarnations. **Buddha wished to impart to men a kind of knowledge that has nothing to do with what slumbers in the darkness of ignorance within the human soul as *Samskara***. Such knowledge is acquired by waking to life all the forces contained in the astral body in one incarnation. 'The cause of suffering in the world' — so said Buddha — 'is that something of which man knows nothing has remained behind from earlier incarnations. This legacy from earlier incarnations is the cause of man's ignorance concerning the world; it is the cause of his suffering and pain. But when he becomes conscious of the nature of the forces in his astral body, he can, if he so will, acquire a knowledge that has remained independent of all influences from earlier times — a knowledge that is his very own!'

This was the knowledge that the great Buddha wished to impart to men, and he did so in the form of what is known as **(4) the 'Eightfold Path'**. There he indicates the capacities and qualities which man must develop in order to attain, in the present cycle of human evolution, knowledge that is uninfluenced by the ever-recurring births. Thus by the power he had himself acquired, Buddha raised

his soul to the heights attainable by means of the strongest forces of the astral body, and in the 'Eightfold Path' he showed humanity the way to a kind of knowledge uninfluenced by Samskara. He described the path as follows. —

The Eightfold Path

1. Right View

Man attains this kind of knowledge about the world when he acquires a *right view* of things, a view that has nothing to do with sympathy or antipathy or preference of any sort. He must strive as best he can to acquire the right view of each thing, purely according to what presents itself to him outwardly. That is the first principle: the *right view* of things.

2. Right Judgment

Secondly, man must become independent of what has remained from earlier incarnations; he must also endeavour to judge in accordance with his right view of a thing and not be swayed by any other influences. Thus *right judgment* is the second principle.

3. Right Speech

The third is that he must strive to give true expression to what he desires to communicate to the world, having first acquired the right view and right judgment of it; not only his words but every manifestation of his being must express his own right view — that and that alone. This is *right speech*.

4. Right Action

The fourth principle is that man must strive to act, not according to his sympathies and antipathies, not according to the dark forces of Samskara within him, but in such a way that he lets his right view, right judgment and right speech become *deed*. This is *right action*.

5. Right Vocation

The fifth principle, enabling a man to liberate himself from what is within him, is that he should acquire the right vocation and station in the world. We may best understand what Buddha meant by this, if we remember how many people are dissatisfied with the tasks devolving upon them, believing that some other position would be more advantageous. But a man should be able to derive from the situation into which he is born or into which fate has placed him, the best that is possible, i.e. to acquire the right 'occupation' or 'vocation'. Whoever finds no satisfaction in the situation in which he is placed, will not be able to derive from it the power to unfold right activity in the world. This is what Buddha called *right vocation*.

6. Right Habits

The sixth principle is that a man should make increasing efforts to ensure that what he acquires through right views, right judgment and so forth, shall become *habit* in him. He is born into the world with certain habits. A child gives evidence of this or that inclination or habit. But man's endeavours should be directed, not towards retaining the habits, proceeding from Samskara but towards acquiring those that gradually become his own as the result of right views, right judgment, right speech, and so on. These are the *right habits*.

7. Right Mindfulness

The seventh principle is that a man should bring order into his life through not invariably forgetting yesterday when he has to act to-day. He would never accomplish anything if he had to learn his skills anew each time. He must strive to develop recollectedness, mindfulness,

regarding everything in his life. He must always turn to account what he has already learnt, he must link the present with the past. Thus along the Eightfold Path man must acquire *right mindfulness* in the sense of Buddha's teaching.

8. Right Contemplation

The eighth quality is acquired when, without partiality for one view or another and without being influenced by any element remaining in him from former incarnations, he surrenders himself with pure devotion to the things of the world, immerses himself in them and lets them alone speak to him. This is *right contemplation*.

This is the Eightfold Path, of which Buddha said to his disciples that if followed it would gradually lead to the extinction of the thirst for existence with its attendant suffering, and impart to the soul something that brings liberation from elements enslaving it from past lives.

We have now been able to grasp something of the spirit and origin of Buddhism. We know too what significance lies in the fact that the Bodhisattva of old became Buddha. The Bodhisattva had always allowed everything connected with his mission to flow into humanity. In very ancient times, before Buddha came into the world, men were not able to apply even their inner forces in such a way that they themselves could have developed the attributes of the Eightfold Path. Influences flowing from the spiritual world were necessary to make this possible, and it was the Bodhisattva of old who enabled these influences to stream down upon mankind. It was therefore an event of unique significance when this Bodhisattva became Buddha and now gave forth in the form of teaching what in earlier times he had caused to flow down upon men from above. He had now brought into the world a physical body able to unfold *out of itself*, forces that formerly could flow down from higher realms only. The *first body* of this kind was brought into the world by Gautama Buddha. Everything he had formerly caused to flow down from above became reality in the physical world at that time. It is a happening of great and far-reaching importance for the whole of Earth evolution when forces that have streamed down upon humanity from epoch to epoch are present one day in the bodily nature of a human being on Earth. *A power that can pass over into all men is then engendered.*

In the body of Gautama Buddha lie the causes enabling men in all ages to develop in their own being the powers of the Eightfold Path. Buddha's existence ensured for men the possibility of right thinking! And whatever comes to pass in the future in this respect, until the principles of the Eightfold Path become reality in the whole of mankind, will all be thanks to that existence. What Buddha bore within himself he surrendered to men for their spiritual nourishment.

Legend of the Hare

Generally speaking, no science to-day perceives these significant facts in the evolution of humanity, but they are often presented in simple fairy-tales and legends. I have emphasized more than once that fairy-tales and legends are often wiser and more truly 'scientific' than our objective science itself. In its depths the human soul has always sensed a certain truth connected with the nature of a Being such as a Bodhisattva: that, to begin with, something streams down from above, then becomes by degrees a possession of the soul and thereafter rays back again into the cosmos from the soul itself. Men who were able to feel the significance of this either dimly or clearly said to themselves: like the rays of the sun from the heavens, so did the Bodhisattva once ray down upon the Earth the forces of the doctrine of compassion and love, the forces developed through the principles of the Eightfold Path. But then the Bodhisattva descended into a human body and surrendered to men the power that was once his own possession. This power now lives in humanity and streams back into the cosmos as the rays of the sun are reflected back in the moon's light. This

was felt to be of special significance in regions where it was customary to express such a truth in the form of a fairy-tale or legend. Thus the following remarkable legend was narrated in the regions where the Bodhisattva appeared.

Once upon a time the Buddha lived as a hare. It was an age when other creatures of many different species were looking for food, but it had all been consumed. The plant food which the hare itself could eat was not suitable for carnivorous creatures. The hare, who was in reality the Buddha, saw a Brahman passing by and resolved to sacrifice himself in order to provide food. At that moment the God appeared and saw the noble deed. A chasm opened and swallowed the hare. Then the God took a tincture and drew the picture of the hare on the moon. And since that time the picture of Buddha as the hare is to be seen on the face of the moon. In the West we do not speak of the 'hare in the moon' but of the 'man in the moon'.

A Kalmuck fairy-tale expresses this still more cogently. In the moon lives a hare; it came there because once upon a time the Buddha sacrificed himself and the Earth-Spirit drew the picture of the hare on the moon. This expresses the great truth of the Bodhisattva becoming Buddha and sacrificing the substance of his very being to mankind for nourishment, so that his forces now ray out into the world from the hearts of men.

The Shepherds

Of a Being such as the Bodhisattva who became Buddha, we said — and this is the teaching of all who know: When a Being passes through this stage he has had his last incarnation on the Earth, for his whole nature is contained within a human body. Such a Being never again incarnates in this sense. Hence when the Buddha became aware of the significance of his present existence, he could say: 'This is my last incarnation; I shall not again incarnate on the Earth!' — It would however be erroneous to think that such a Being then withdraws altogether from Earth-existence. True, he does not enter directly into a physical body but he assumes another body — of an astral or etheric nature — and so continues to send his influences into the world. The way in which such a Being who has passed through the last incarnation belonging to his own destiny continues to work in the world, may be understood by thinking of the following facts.

An ordinary human being, consisting of physical body, etheric body, astral body and Ego, can be permeated by such a Being. It is possible for a Being of this rank, who no longer descends into a physical body but still has an astral body, to be membered into the astral body of another human being. This man may well become a personality of importance, for the forces of a Being who has already passed through his last incarnation on the Earth are now working in him. Thus an astral Being unites with the astral nature of some individual on the Earth. Such a union may take place in a most complicated way. When the Buddha appeared to the shepherds in the picture of the 'heavenly host', he was not in a physical body but in an astral body. He had assumed a body in which he could still send his influences to the Earth. Thus in the case of a Being who has become a Buddha, we distinguish three bodies:

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1. *The body he has before he attains Buddhahood, when he is still working from above as a Bodhisattva; it is a body that does not contain in itself all the powers at his command; he still lives in spiritual heights and is linked with his earlier mission as was the Bodhisattva before his mission became the Buddha's mission. As long as such a Being is living in a body of this nature, his body is called a 'Dharmakaya';*

2. *The body which such a Being builds as his own and through which he brings to expression, in the physical body, everything he has within him. This body is called the 'body of perfection', 'Sambhogakaya'.*
 3. *The body which such a Being assumes, after he has passed through the stage of perfection and can work from above in the way described. This body is called a Nirmanakaya'. [3]*
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We can therefore say that the 'Nirmanakaya' of Buddha appeared to the shepherds in the picture of the angelic host. Buddha appeared in the radiance of his Nirmanakaya and revealed himself in this way to the shepherds. But he was to find further ways of working into the events in Palestine at this crucial point of time.

To understand this we must briefly recall what is known to us from other lectures about the nature of man. Spiritual science speaks of several 'births'. At what is called 'physical birth' the human being strips off, as it were, the maternal physical sheath; at the seventh year he strips off the etheric sheath which envelops him until the change of teeth just as the maternal physical sheath enveloped him until physical birth. At puberty — about the fourteenth or fifteenth year in the modern epoch — the human being strips off the astral sheath that is around him until then. It is not until the seventh year that the human etheric body is born outwardly as a free body; the astral body is born at puberty, when the outer astral sheath is cast off.

The Child

Let us now consider what it is that is discarded at puberty. In Palestine and the neighbouring regions this point of time occurs normally at about the twelfth year — rather earlier than in lands farther to the West. In the ordinary way this protective astral sheath is cast off and given over to the outer astral world. In the case of the child who descended from the priestly line of the House of David, however, something different happened. At the age of twelve the astral sheath was cast off but did not dissolve in the universal astral world. Just as it was, as the protective astral sheath of the young boy, with all the vitalising forces that had streamed into it between the change of teeth and puberty, it now united with the Nirmanakaya of Buddha. The spiritual body that had once appeared to the shepherds as the radiant angelic host united with the astral sheath released from the twelve-year-old Jesus, united with all the forces through which the freshness of youth is maintained during the period between the second dentition and puberty. The Nirmanakaya which shone upon the Nathan Jesus-child from birth onwards united with the astral sheath detached from this child at puberty; it became one with this sheath and was thereby *rejuvenated*. Through this rejuvenation, what Buddha had formerly given to the world could be manifest again in the Jesus-child. Hence the boy was able to speak with all the simplicity of childhood about the lofty teachings of compassion and love to which we have referred to-day. When Jesus was found in the temple he was speaking in a way that astonished those around him, because he was enveloped by the Nirmanakaya of Buddha, refreshed as from a fountain of youth by the boy's astral sheath.

These are facts which can become known to the spiritual investigator and which the writer of the Gospel of St. Luke has indicated in the remarkable scene when a sudden change came over the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple. We must grasp what it was that had happened and then we shall understand why the boy no longer spoke as he had formerly been wont to speak. It so happened that at this very time, King Kanisha of Tibet summoned a Synod in India and proclaimed

ancient Buddhism to be the orthodox religion. But in the meantime Buddha himself had advanced! He had absorbed the forces of the protective astral sheath of the Jesus-child and was thereby able to speak in a new way to the hearts and souls of men.

The Gospel of St. Luke contains Buddhism in a new form, as though springing from a fountain of youth; hence it expresses the religion of compassion and love in a form comprehensible to the simplest souls. We can read what the writer of the Gospel of St. Luke has woven into the text of his Gospel, but still more is contained in its depths. Only part of what appertains to the scene of Jesus in the temple could be described to-day and even greater depths of this mystery have still to be explained. Light will then be shed upon the earlier as well as upon the later years of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Above source: <https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA114/English/RSP1964/19090917p01.html>

Rudolf Steiner's Eight Exercises

Compare the following to the Buddha's Eightfold Path, in light of what is learned in the above two lectures.

Sunday

Right Judgment

To determine on even the most insignificant matter only after fully reasoned deliberation. All unthinking behaviour, all meaningless actions, should be kept far away from the soul. One should always have well-weighed reasons for everything. And one should definitely abstain from doing anything for which there is no significant reason.

Once one is convinced of the rightness of a decision, one must hold fast to it, with inner steadfastness.

Monday

Right Word

Talking. Only what has sense and meaning should come from the lips of one striving for higher development. All talking for the sake of talking — to kill time — is in this sense harmful.

The usual kind of conversation, a disjointed medley of remarks, should be avoided. This does not mean shutting oneself off from intercourse with one's fellows; it is precisely then that talk should gradually be led to significance. One adopts a thoughtful attitude to every speech and answer taking all aspects into account. Never talk without cause — be gladly silent. One tries not to talk too much or too little. First listen quietly; then reflect on what has been said.

Tuesday

Right Deed

External actions. These should not be disturbing for our fellow-men. Where an occasion calls for action out of one's inner being, deliberate carefully how one can best meet the occasion — for the good of the whole, the lasting happiness of man, the eternal.

Where one does things of one's own accord, out of one's own initiative: consider most thoroughly beforehand the effect of one's actions.

Wednesday

Right Standpoint

The ordering of life. To live in accordance with Nature and Spirit. Not to be swamped by the external trivialities of life. To avoid all that brings unrest and haste into life. To hurry over nothing, but also not to be indolent. To look on life as a means for working towards higher development and to behave accordingly.

Thursday

Right Habit

Human Endeavour. One should take care to do nothing that lies beyond one's powers — but also to leave nothing undone which lies within them.

To look beyond the everyday, the momentary, and to set oneself aims and ideals connected with the highest duties of a human being. For instance, in the sense of the prescribed exercises, to try to develop oneself so that afterwards one may be able all the more to help and advise one's fellow-men — though perhaps not in the immediate future.

Friday

Right Memory

The endeavour to learn as much as possible from life.

Nothing goes by us without giving us a chance to gain experiences that are useful for life. If one has done something wrongly or imperfectly, that becomes a motive for doing it rightly or more perfectly, later on.

If one sees others doing something, one observes them with the like end in view (yet not coldly or heartlessly). And one does nothing without looking back to past experiences which can be of assistance in one's decisions and

achievements.

One can learn from everyone — even from children if one is attentive.

Saturday

Right Opinion

To pay attention to one's ideas.

To think only significant thoughts. To learn little by little to separate in one's thoughts the essential from the nonessential, the eternal from the transitory, truth from mere opinion.

In listening to the talk of one's fellow-men, to try and become quite still inwardly, foregoing all assent, and still more all unfavourable judgments (criticism, rejection), even in one's thoughts and feelings.

Every Day

Right Examination


To turn one's gaze inwards from time to time, even if only for five minutes daily at the same time. In so doing one should sink down into oneself, carefully take counsel with oneself, test and form one's principles of life, run through in thought one's knowledge — or lack of it — weigh up one's duties, think over the contents and true purpose of life, feel genuinely pained by one's own errors and imperfections. In a word: labour to discover the essential, the enduring, and earnestly aim at goals in accord with it: for instance, virtues to be acquired. (Not to fall into the mistake of thinking that one has done something well, but to strive ever further towards the highest standards.)

Overview of Personal Qualities to Achieve

- **Right Judgment:** Abstain from doing anything for which there is no significant reason.
- **Right Word:** All talk should be significant.
- **Right Deed:** Consider beforehand the effect of one's actions.
- **Right Standpoint:** Live in accordance with Nature and Spirit, working towards higher development.
- **Right Habit:** Set oneself aims and ideals connected with the highest duties of a human being.
- **Right Memory:** Learn as much as possible from life.

- **Right Opinion:** Think only significant thoughts.
- **Right Examination:** Take time for inward reflection.

Notes

1.  The first kind of knowledge accessible to man can be described by saying: he beholds the world through his senses and assimilates what he perceives by means of his intellect and the other faculties of his soul. Beyond this, there are three further stages of knowledge, of cognition: the first is the stage of Imagination, Imaginative Cognition, the second is the stage of Inspiration, and the third is the stage of Intuition — but the term 'Intuition' must be understood in its true sense.

The faculty of Imaginative Cognition is possessed by one before whose eye of spirit all that lies behind the world of the senses is unfolded in mighty, cosmic pictures — but these pictures do not in the least resemble anything we call by this name in everyday life. Apart from the difference that the pictures revealed by Imaginative Cognition are independent of the laws of three-dimensional space, other characteristics make it impossible for them to be compared with anything in the world of the senses.

Within this world of Imagination you encounter everything that is behind the sense-world and is imperceptible to the physical senses — for instance, the etheric and astral bodies. A man whose knowledge of the world is derived from this clairvoyant, Imaginative perception, becomes acquainted with the outward aspect of higher beings, just as you become acquainted with the outward, physical aspect of a man in the physical world who, let us say, passes in front of you in the street. You know more about him when there is an opportunity of talking with him. His words then give you an impression differing from the one he makes upon you when you look at him in the street. In the case of many a man whom you pass by (to mention this one example only) you cannot observe whether his soul is moved by inner joy or grief, sorrow or delight. But you can discover this if you converse with him. In the one case his outward aspect is conveyed to you through everything you can perceive without his assistance; in the other case he expresses his very self to you. The same applies to the beings of the super-sensible world. A clairvoyant who comes to recognize these beings through Imaginative Cognition knows only their outward aspect. But he hears them give expression to their very selves when he rises from Imaginative Knowledge to Knowledge through Inspiration. He then has actual intercourse with these beings. They communicate to him from their inmost selves *what* and *who* they are. Inspiration is therefore a higher stage of knowledge than Imagination, and more is learnt about the beings of the world of soul-and-spirit at the stage of Inspiration than can be learnt through Imagination.

If with this in mind we turn our attention to the four Gospels, we may say that the Gospel of St. John is written from the vantage-point of one who in the fullest sense was an Initiate, cognisant at the stage of Intuition of the mysteries of the super-sensible world, and who therefore describes the Christ Event as revealed by the vision of Intuition. But if close attention is paid to the distinctive characteristics of St. John's Gospel it will have to be admitted that the features

standing out most clearly are presented from the standpoint of Inspiration and Intuition, while everything originating from the pictures of Imagination is shadowy and lacks definition. Thus if we disregard what was still revealed to him through Imagination, we may call the writer of St. John's Gospel the messenger of everything relating to the Christ Event that is vouchsafed to one endowed with the power of apprehending the inner word at the stage of Intuition. Hence he describes the mysteries of Christ's Kingdom as receiving their character through the inner Word, or Logos. Knowledge through Inspiration and Intuition is the source of the Gospel of St. John.


It is different in the case of the other three Gospels, and not one of their writers expressed his message as clearly as did the writer of the Gospel of St. Luke. In a short but remarkable preface it is said, in effect, that many others had previously attempted to collect and set forth the stories in circulation concerning the events in Palestine; but that for the sake of accuracy and order the writer of this Gospel is now undertaking to present the things which ... and now come significant words ... could be understood by those who from the beginning were 'eye-witnesses and servants (ministers) of the Word' — that is the usual rendering. The aim of the writer of this Gospel is therefore to communicate what eye-witnesses — it would be better to say 'seers' (*Selbstseher*) — and servants of the Word had to say. In the sense of St. Luke's Gospel, 'seers' are men who through Imaginative Cognition can penetrate into the world of pictures and there behold the Christ Event; people specially trained to perceive these Imaginations are seers with accurate and clear vision at the same time as being 'servants of the Word' — a significant phrase — and the writer of St. Luke's Gospel uses their communications as a foundation. He does not say 'possessors' of the Word, because such persons would have reached the stage of Inspiration in the fullest sense; he says 'servants' of the Word — people who could count less upon Inspirations than upon Imaginations in their own knowledge but for whom communications from the world of Inspiration were nevertheless available. The results of Inspirational Cognition were communicated to them and they could proclaim what their inspired teachers had made known to them. They were 'servants', not 'possessors' of the Word.


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Thus the Gospel of St. Luke is founded upon the communications of seers, themselves knowers of the world of Imagination; they are those who, having learnt to express their visions of that world through means made possible by their inspired teachers, had themselves become

'servants of the Word'.

Source: [Lecture 1](#)

2.  ²⁵ And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. ²⁶ And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, ²⁸ Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰ For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹ Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; ³² A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:25-32)

3.  Also referred to in Buddhist literature as 'the Body of Transformation'.

Source: https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA114/English/RSP1964/GosLuk_index.html



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