

On Tulku

Part 2 of 2

Franklin Merrell-Wolff
August 4, 1970

Afternoon. September 9, 1970.¹

This morning we considered, to some extent, three forms of *tulku*, namely, the form that is employed in the case of the never-dying Buddha in Tibet, the form that is employed for the purposes of communication, and third, a form that can be employed by a qualified *yogin* near the end of life if he finds an unoccupied body that is still capable of being revitalized, thereby extending his life in the world. We have not yet considered the theoretical basis whereby all this may be possible; that we shall proceed to sketch now. But for this purpose we have to be familiar with a different psychology from that known in the West. It is not wholly psychological information; it is in part information concerning the physical entity as well.

It is said that man is composed of seven principles or aggregates, listed variously, but one form which is familiar is given as follows: first, the *Atman*; second, *Buddhi*; third, *Manas*; fourth, *Kama Manas*; fifth, *Kama Rupa*; sixth, *Prana*; and seventh, *Linga Sharira*. Sometimes the lists give a *Sthula Sharira*, which means the physical body, but this list that I have outlined involves the point that the purely physical side of man is an effect; that the gross matter is hung onto the paradigm, namely, the *Linga Sharira*, which often is called an *astral body*.²

Now this *Linga Sharira* performs two functions. In one sense it is the paradigm, the shape which governs the form or appearance of the entity; but in another sense it is the vehicle by which life or *Prana* is borne into the organism.

The *Kama Rupa*, or *Kama* in a certain technical sense, is the principle of desire which becomes a form, or *Rupa*, only after death. This principle is generally the most fallen of the principles in the present humanity. It is the basis of all that is known as craving or lust and has manifested in the history of the human race in very dark forms indeed, as for instance, the five lusts, such as the lust for drink, the lust for food in excess of all needs, the lust for sex, the lust of the gambler, and the lust of the killer. The latter being the basis of the Roman games and in a certain degree is carried on in the bull fights and, in very much modified form, perhaps is traceable in the case of the football game. It is that which leads the hunter to kill for the sake of killing, not for necessary food but in the name of sport. So it is, as we ordinarily know it, a very fallen principle, that which carries the darkest side in human nature. But it is not necessarily so, and if one traces up the meaning of the term in

¹ Parts 1 and 2 of "On Tulku" were recorded on August 4, 1970, to be presented on Sunday, August 9, 1970. Wolff inadvertently cites the wrong date here.

² A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912), 60-74. In this book, the seven principles are listed as: *Atma*, *Buddhi*, *Manas*, *Kama Rupa*, *Linga Sharira*, *Prana*, and *Rupa*.

the *Theosophical Glossary*, he'll find below the word *Kama* the term *Kama Deva*, and in this it is pointed out that the pure *Kama* is also a high principle which carries the quality of compassion. So there is, even in a Buddha, a pure *Kama*.

Above that is what is known as *Kama Manas*, which could be translated as mind led by desire. This is characteristic of all thinking which may properly be called "wishful thinking" and a very dominant kind of thinking indeed; one sees it manifested throughout practical life all the time: the adversaries in a court, for instance, are presenting views not to serve the truth of the matter but to serve the desirable objective of getting a conviction on one side or getting an acquittal on the other; or the use of mind in all practical applications; and for the gaining of wealth. Here the objective is not pure truth for its own sake. We begin to rise above this aspect of mind in our searching in pure science. There, to a considerable degree, men seek for truth regardless of personal preference. But it is not wholly incorruptible; there are preferred interpretations of the truth that sometime prevent an individual from acknowledging that the evidence does not support him. However, the higher use of mind is present in the scientific search and in the philosophic search.

We come then to *Manas* in its purer form, and this is a reflector or manifester of that which above is only in essential form. *Buddhi* is viewed as spiritual soul, as that which contains the light of the *Atman*, and is also the bearer of unformed but essential knowledge. And on top of all is the pure *Atman*, the Self with a bearer of the power to be aware. This *Atman* has a character which is not individual. Individuality and personality are determined by the complex of the principles as they manifest in any given entity. But the pure power to be aware is wholly impersonal and is not manifold. In other words, there are not many *Atmans*. There is one *Atman*, the *Paramatman*, which, however, appears as many because of the instruments through which it functions. There is the figure of the sun which shines in the dewdrop as symbolizing this. In each dewdrop there is a little sun, apparently, which is a reflection of the great and unitary sun in the sky. The unitary sun in the sky may symbolize here the *Atman*, the *Paramatman*; whereas, the images of the sun in each dewdrop are the apparently many *Atmans* in humanity, but only apparently so, for the "I" in me and the "I" in thee is, in the last analysis, the one and only I of all.

Now, these principles given in a sevenfold form are not uniformly present in all classifications. This is the form that's identified with "Esoteric Buddhism." But there is another form identified with the *Taraka* yoga, and in this there is the *Atman* and three *Upadhis*. This is the one that'll be important for our purposes. The *Upadhis* are respectively: *Karanopadhi*, sometimes translated the causal body; then the *Sukshmopadhi*, consisting of higher and lower *Manas* and *Kama*; and finally, the *Sthulopadhi*, consisting of *Prana*, *Linga Sharira*, or astral, and the *Sthula Sharira*, or the gross physical.³

Now, it is said that an Adept, one who is completely master of himself and all his powers, can divide himself into three entities without destroying himself; whereas, he could not divide himself into seven entities without destroying himself as an entity. He, thus, could function through the *Karanopadhi* combined with the *Atman*; and

³ The schema to which Wolff is referring appears to be that found in H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Press, 1893), 181.

independently function through the *Sukshmopadhi* as in another field of activity; and finally, as the *Sthulopadhi* in an earthly body—that the activities of these three forms can be independent, that there is present a Self in each, in other words an *Atman* in each, and bear in mind, this does not mean three *Atmans*. You might say there are three rays of the *Atman*, the apparent individuality of the Self being added by the *Upadhis* not as an inherent property of the *Atman* itself.

Now, this is where we get an explanation of how a *tulku*, such as that of Shankara and, presumptively, in the case also of the Dalai and Tashi Lamas, is possible. In a certain manuscript that was on H. P. Blavatsky's desk at the time of her passing, there is a section devoted to "The Mystery of [the] Buddha"⁴ consisting of something like eleven chapters which gives us very valuable insight into our problem. Much of it is in the form of hints rather than in the form of categorical statements, but from the study of this material we can build a really comprehensive or at least intelligible picture of what took place, especially in the case of Shankara. It is said that at the time of the death of Buddha, he, in the highest sense of the word, in the sense of his true Self, entered the state of *Nirvana*, but left the intermediate principles, namely those identified with the *Sukshmopadhi* I have already spoken of, that the lower group of principles, namely the *Sthulopadhi*, were dropped and the corpse was burned and the remains of it used for, oh, remnants that many Buddhists value. Now, this *Sukshmopadhi* was a group of principles carrying the intelligence and wisdom of the Buddha. These were too pure to be disintegrated in what is commonly known as the second death which follows the outer gross death of the ordinary individual. They persisted. Then when the *Brahman* baby was born that was to be known as Shankara, it is said that these intermediate principles constituting the *Sukshmopadhi* replaced the normal, corresponding principles of the entity that was born as the babe. So that, in one sense, it was the wisdom of the Buddha that dominated in the life of Shankara; the mind was the mind of the Buddha, the knowledge was the knowledge of the Buddha, and the wisdom was the wisdom of the Buddha. Meanwhile, the lower principles belonged to another entity whose history prior to this time seems to be unknown. It is said that the higher principle also belonged to the entity that produced the child; that it was the intermediate principles that belonged to the Buddha. This would suggest that the *Karanopadhi* also belonged to the one who was born as the infant. But this has also been challenged and there's some question here that I may refer to later.

Now, the life lasted for thirty-two years. At any rate, sometime at the end of the thirty-two years, in the thirty-third year, the intermediate principles which belonged to the Buddha were withdrawn and the corresponding principles which normally belonged to the entity that functioned as the "junior partner" were returned to their normal place. This involved a very serious shock and led to serious consequences. Bear in mind how it would be if one lived a very active life on a high pinnacle of knowledge and power and then all of a sudden had withdrawn from him this superior knowledge and power and had in their place principles that you might say were relatively green, untrained, and so forth. At this point there is a problem, and I may add some words as in a footnote.

⁴ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 3, 376.

This information I have derived recently and not from a book. Where are these principles that are removed when certain principles of another entity, such as the Buddha, occupy their place in the body of a given entity? They're stored somewhere; you might say that they're kept in cold storage. Actually, they can only be stored in the organism, the subtle organism, of a living entity. And I'm told that there are such entities that are qualified for the performance of this function who do not dwell on Earth or on any planet, but in another realm which you might call "spatial"; that these principles are, therefore, not totally without some form of experience. But the experience is not at all related to this world, so that when they are returned to their normal possessor they can produce a condition of considerable confusion and, as in the case of Shankara, could constitute a very serious letdown. It could even induce a state of depression.

Well, the story goes on to say that at this time Shankara withdrew into a cave where he admitted none of his followers, and has never been seen since. But there are certain esoteric statements which HPB was able to peruse in her days in Tibetan monasteries which indicate, state, or at least hint, that there was a voluntary suicide or taking of life by pure act of will on the part of Shankara thereby invoking *karma*—the *karma* being that when any entity takes his own life, he is required to die by violence against his will in a later incarnation. Shankara, in this act, sinned and invoked *karma*. The story from this point is more in the form of hints. There is a statement as to a later appearance of the Buddha in a *tulku* combination, but it is a blank line in the text. I was fortunate enough to know the man who had reduced this manuscript to typewritten form; it was John Price, the brother of the James Price who has written certain books with which most of you are familiar. He verified that the manuscript was in the handwriting of HPB, so there's no real question as to its authenticity. But at this point the name had been written down and then crossed out very carefully, and he tried his best to read it, he could not, but his intuition indicated to him that it was Jesus. The implication is very strong; it is not specifically stated, but it would appear that by reason of *karma*, the junior partner appeared again and was the one who later was known as Jesus. And at the age of thirty-three, the same age at which he had committed suicide as Shankara, he died against his will by violence. All of it checks.

Now, certain things support this hypothesis: first of all, if Buddha took the attitude in the case of the *Brahmans* who persecuted his disciples, that they had sinned but he was the cause of their sinning and, therefore, he would come to them, is it not likely that, likewise, he would say of Shankara that he had sinned but again that the Blessed One was the cause of that sin and he would come again with Shankara. And also would give a meaning to the words of the Christ on the cross when he says, "My Father, why hast thou deserted me?" In other words, the higher entity, the senior partner, had withdrawn because the junior partner had to face his *karma* alone.

The story goes on to say that there were later *tulku* incarnations of the Blessed One—one as Apollonius of Tyana, and finally as Tsong-Kha-pa in Tibet, and then there is the continuing story of the continuing incarnations as the Dalai and Tashi Lamas. Now, here is a very interesting statement: it is said that both the Dalai and the Tashi Lamas are incarnations of the Great Buddha; that in the case of the Dalai Lama, it is the Great Buddha as Avalokiteshvara, and in the case of the Tashi Lama, it is the Great Buddha as Amitabha. In the manuscript that dealt with "The Mystery of [the] Buddha," it again

speaks of these two aspects, that the two inner parts of the Buddha are identical with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and Adi Buddha as Amitabha, in other words, two entities. Now, remember that it is stated in connection with the *Taraka* yoga division into four principles, *Atman* and three *Upadhis*, that the Adept can divide himself into three parts. But if he is no longer living in a gross body that belongs to himself, but rather in the *Sthulopadhis* of other entities, presumptively his disciples, then he has two parts into which he could divide himself, namely the *Karanopadhi* and the *Sukshmopadhi* and as these can be separated, then, we appear to have a protracted separation in two incarnations with one central entity inwardly integrating both.

Now, I come to a point that I spoke of before that said I might take up later. Was it the *Sukshmopadhi* that replaced the intermediate principles in Shankara, or something else? Now, it is said in the literature that Buddha had the advantage in the Shankara incarnation of a *Brahman* mentality, something he lacked in his own natural incarnation as Gautama for there he was a *Kshatriya*, in other words, one of the ruling class who has a different kind of mentality not so adept in the field of the dialectic, but in the case of the Shankara incarnation he had the advantages of the *Brahman* mentality. But where would that mentality abide? It wouldn't abide in the combination of *Prana*, *Linga Sharira*, and the gross physical body. It would abide preeminently just in these intermediate principles. So I don't see how the Buddha would have gained the advantage of a *Brahmanical* mentality if it was his own mentality as the Prince were the instruments with which he worked in Shankara. So the thought arises, could it be that the replacement in Shankara was on the level of the *Karanopadhi*, the essential knowledge and wisdom, whereas the formal principle was that which belonged to the *Brahman* child? This thought has come to me. I have suggested it. It is at variance with what was written by HPB, and I don't know whether it is valid or not, but it would resolve the difficulty of which I have spoken. Now, that is enough of this portion of the discussion of *tulku*.

In *The Secret Doctrine* it is stated that at a certain time in the mid-history of what is called the Third Root-Race, there was an incarnation of the *Manasaputra*. The story is that the entities that were evolving up to that time were sons of the *Lunar Pitri*; that they lacked the principle of mind in its higher sense, at least; that they were essentially animal-like humans and, in fact, ape-like in appearance. Now, there was a certain body of entities known as *Dhyan Chohans*, or as *Kumaras*, or in the Hebrew literature as the *Elohim*. A certain group of these had been guilty of some error which is beyond our understanding, but that this particular group had to face the *karmic* penalty of descending, not to the very base of all, but rather to the level of the human-like entity and had to incarnate in them. It was a *karmic* order. But to these very high and pure entities the idea of having to enter into animal-like or even ape-like creatures was very repugnant. Some, it is said, had the courage to respond at once, and did so enter; others projected down a ray; and still others merely overshadowed. Though later in time, they all had to perform the incarnation.

Now this is a superposition of one entity upon another, of one Monad, as it were, upon another, and, therefore, it would seem to meet the conditions of *tulku*; although in that portion of *The Secret Doctrine* where this subject is discussed, I do not remember that the term *tulku* was employed. But in conformity with this statement it would appear that humanity, or at least part of it, are now existing as *tulku* combinations. In the literature it is stated that not all human-like entities of that time had evolved to a point

sufficient for such a superimposed incarnation. And it's specifically stated that it did not take place in connection with the natives of Australia or Tasmania and, at any rate, some of the natives of Africa south of the Sahara. Specifically, in the case of Africa the Bushmen are mentioned. It is not clear whether the Bushmen are mentioned as an example or whether it applied only to them. It is possible that the Africans south of the Sahara did not qualify as a whole, but on this the literature is not clear.⁵

Now, this brought to the then animal-like entities the principle of mind, that is mind not in the animalistic sense but in the higher, the truly human sense of the word, for man, after all, differs from the animal by reason of mind; and here, it would appear, by reason of the descent of the *Manasaputra*, or Sons of Mind. Certain things are evident, that, for instance, in the case of those representatives of the *Manasaputra* who promptly accepted incarnation in these bodies, however repugnant, would have advanced the entities, the compound entities which then existed, well beyond those who received the benefit of only a ray and particularly of those who had the benefit of only an overshadowing. This would lead, then, to the consequence that there is a difference and probably a very considerable difference in the degree of evolution among the different peoples of the earth or among different individuals, at least, in the different races.

There are certain consequences here that are of interest. It is stated that there are not two Monads in these entities but rather that the two Monads united to form one, just as two rays may become one ray, as of sunlight entering through apertures. An interesting possibility arises. If the sense of "I" within me is one, as it is obviously in certainly most cases, then the question arises, am I an ape-like creature bearing upon my back a representative of the *Manasaputra*, or am I identical with this representative of the *Manasaputra* riding on the back of an ape-like creature? It makes a lot of difference with what one identifies himself. In my own case, it would seem to me that I am indeed a fallen *Dhyan Chohan* riding upon the back of an ape-like creature. And perhaps we all have the privilege of choosing, and that would make an enormous difference in our future identification and evolution.

Now certain thoughts arise in this connection. Mayhap most people prefer to think of themselves as the ape-like creature with perhaps the *Dhyan Chohan* riding on their backs. This would seem to apply to all those who tend naturally towards a materialistic or animalistic outlook. Perhaps that's why some men tend to be behaviorists. They are really reflecting their own prejudices and think of themselves as essentially beastly creatures instead of thinking of themselves as incarnations of intelligence. It might account for the difference between those who, on one hand, are naturally oriented to consciousness as the root principle in the universe, and those who are naturally oriented to matter as the root principle in the universe. The latter, thus, thinking of themselves essentially as only beasts of burden bearing on their backs the intelligent beings, but not themselves essentially intelligent beings. This is an interesting thought.

There's another one too. It could be that HPB. in referring to the African Bushmen was not specifically referring to the tribe in the southern portion of Africa that is today called the Bushmen, but was thinking of all the people who lived in the bush, in which case it would include all Africans native to the regions below the Sahara. This, in

⁵ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 2, 176-178.

turn, ties in with something said by Toynbee, the great historian. He has said that the only substantial area in the world which never developed an advanced culture of its own, that is one that was indigenous to the people, was Africa south of the Sahara. With North Africa it is different; there, there were the Egyptians, the Carthaginians, the Moors—peoples that definitely did develop a culture. And there were many cultures developed in Asia. And, of course, in most recent history, culture has been a predominant fact in Europe, including the two forms of the Classical and the Western culture. And over in the Americas, there was a definite and fairly advanced culture in Mexico, one in Central America, and a third on the western slopes of the South American continent.

There are implications that could grow out of this that have a definite bearing upon the problem of pedagogy. It has been pointed out by certain anthropologists that some peoples are lacking in the conceptual power, and that, therefore, any effort to educate them by the means that are appropriate to those who are naturally advanced mentally, will not be effective and that other means must be applied. To those who are incarnations of the *Manasaputra*, there would be a natural orientation to the concept, the concept being the bearer of that power which moves in terms of universals rather than of particulars only. But the peoples, on the other hand, who have only the consciousness of particulars and build up complexes perhaps of very fine differentiation in particulars, thus knowing, for instance, “tree” specifically, but being incapable of conceiving of “forest.” I’m using this illustration in a symbolic sense, but there is a difference between a verbal image representing a specific object and a verbal concept meaning a universal, such as a forest. In other words, there’s a difference between understanding the meaning of ‘tree’ and the understanding of the meaning of ‘treeness’. And if in some races this sense of treeness is totally lacking, that would have to be a consideration of importance for him who is dealing with pedagogical problems. This is enough, then, with respect to this portion of the discussion of *tulku*. I will now advance to certain thoughts of my own based upon certain subtle experiences.

There are certain subtle experiences of my own which began back in 1936, at the time when I was writing *Pathways*. In more than one place, it is stated there that the “I” became “we” and yet remained “I.” The sense was very subtle, but it seemed to me at such times that my own consciousness was supplemented by a larger consciousness—not something as described by HPB in the letter that was quoted earlier, but much more subtle than that—that there was something like a superposition of a wider and richer consciousness which, nonetheless, seemed to me to be my own and not the consciousness of another personality or individuality; and yet, that it was in some sense, perhaps on the level of essentiality rather than on the level of form, more than that which is indigenous to this particular individuality. It is as though on the level of the Self, more than one ray became for such times one ray; whether it was more than two or not, I am unable to say. This, though, leads to some interesting possibilities: a reaching beyond perhaps the restricted meaning of the word *tulku*, and reaching out into the zone that might be designated “superposition.”

Superposition of one consciousness upon another is a possibility. It is in this means that, it is said, it is possible to know the consciousness of another entity, particularly to know the *Akashic* records, which involves, not a reading of something external to oneself, but an actual superposition of the consciousness of that time upon

oneself so that it is *felt* with all the intensity of feeling, however much it may, in addition, be a record of ideas and sense impressions. That such a possibility exists, I have personally verified through the need of acquiring certain information. And I can say this of it, that for the period of the superposition, the consciousness superimposed seems as much my own consciousness as any other that I have ever known. Nonetheless, in my experience, I knew that it was a superposition and that it was not the action of my own indigenous consciousness. How was this possible? Analysis suggests this, that I had an identity in two senses. One we might call the *participating* self, the other the *witnessing* Self. And the witnessing Self seemed to stand above, as it were, overhead, and all the while knew that this superimposed consciousness was not an indigenous consciousness but was simply something that belonged essentially to someone else or to some other state. But to the participating self it was possessed by this superimposed consciousness as though it were my own. This brings out an interesting possibility, something above, perhaps, the level of definite difference of individuality and personality such as is revealed in the quotation from HPB's letter. But these show possibilities before us and it reveals that in the final analysis we human beings are not locked-in, in the sense we ordinarily think. It also reveals that the problem of teaching is not simply that of communicating by idea, but it is also possible to teach by means of that which has variously been called "osmosis," "contagion," "resonance," and "induction," namely a superimposing upon the consciousness of the student of the state which the teacher wishes to bring about. This produces a condition that's much more intimate, much more convincing than merely a communication of conceptual ideas.

Now, this I think sufficiently covers the subject for our present time. It has taken up something over two hours, although I had originally envisaged it as a discourse for one hour, and it by no means exhausts the subject and the possibilities. But it may so happen that you will meet with demonstrations of *tulku* in the not distant future. There is some reason to believe that the outpouring due to come in the last quarter of this century will involve *tulku* in a more extensive form than was true in the last quarter of the last century. I thank you for your patient attention to this more or less abstruse subject matter.