

On the *Tri-Kaya*: Postscript

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There are some thoughts that should be placed in the record which, however, did not seem appropriate to add to the last of the three discourses on the *Tri-Kaya*.

Let us return to a consideration of the *Nirmanakaya*. There are certain implications that seem to follow from what has been said in the preceding discourses. There is, first of all, the initial status of the *Nirmanakaya*, as was pointed out in the paper on “The Mystery of [the] Buddha,” namely, that the *Nirmanakaya* may be attained at a level somewhat below that of the vestibule to *Nirvana*; secondly, considering the statement in *The Voice of the Silence*, there would appear to be a second status of the *Nirmanakaya* as the vesture won as the result of the great renunciation; and then, if we consider the treatment in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, we find that the *Nirmanakayic* vesture can be attained by the acceptance of the Clear Light in the *Sidpa*, or the lowest status or manifestation of that Clear Light; and, finally, it would appear that as the reflexes of the *Dharmakaya* attained at the highest point of the Clear Light, we would have a fourth status of this vesture. There is an interesting question here. Are these all vestures of precisely the same sort, or is there a difference perhaps in their texture? That is a question which I’ll leave unanswered.

There is another problem which appears in connection with the paragraph that starts on p. 96:

Thine own consciousness [*rig-pa*], not formed into anything, in reality void, and the intellect [*shes-rig*], shining and blissful,—these two,—are inseparable. The union of them [*rig-pa* and *shes-rig*] is the *Dharma-Kaya* state of Perfect Enlightenment.¹

But with this consider a footnote that elucidates it further:

From the union of the two states of mind, or consciousness, implied by the two terms *rig-pa* and *shes-rig*, and symbolized by the All-Good Father and the All-Good Mother, is born in the state of the *Dharma-Kaya*, the state of Perfect Enlightenment, Buddhahood. The *Dharma-Kaya* (‘Body of Truth’) symbolizes the purest and the highest state of being, a state of supramundane consciousness, devoid of all mental limitations or obscurations which arise from the contact of the primordial consciousness with matter.²

¹ W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 96.

² *Ibid.*

But the question which arises here is this: since these two forms of consciousness are predicated as inseparable, how can a union of them be affected? It would seem that is a case of one's being already that which he seeks, and, therefore, that it cannot be attained, for one certainly does not attain that which he already is. This brings up a very interesting question. Certainly throughout this text and the other texts, the *Dharmakaya* is viewed as something to be achieved. Yet here is a statement to the effect that inasmuch as the *Dharmakaya* consists of the union of the Pure Consciousness, *rig-pa*, and the relative consciousness, *shes-rig*, and since these two are inseparable, it would appear that we are of necessity, *Dharmakaya* already, and, therefore, Enlightened, and have the state of Buddhahood, and that there is no need of seeking, or striving, or attaining. This is a nice little puzzle, but I think we can find the answer by this consideration: that which is known as *rig-pa*, in the initial state of the seeker is in a condition which we may call unconscious—in the sense that that term is applied to the collective unconscious in modern psychology—and that the union is from that perspective already existent as an unconscious fact; therefore, the achievement lies in rendering it a conscious fact which, indeed, makes all the difference in the world.

But, then, this leads to another problem. That which is called in modern psychology the collective unconscious is predicated here as a universal, pre-existent consciousness; so there is no absolute value attaching to the point of view which says that it is a rendering conscious that which already is an eternal, unconscious fact. So now our distinction has to be transformed into a form of considerable subtlety, namely, that of rendering something that is conscious in one sense also conscious in another sense. Thus, while eternally conscious in the sense of *rig-pa*, it becomes conscious in the sense of *shes-rig*; or, in other words, we achieve consciousness of consciousness—what we might mean by the term 'Self-Conscious'. And thus we drop altogether the notion of a contrast between an unconscious, on one side, and a conscious, on the other, and replace it with the notion of a primordial consciousness, on one side, which is not yet conscious of itself, which, at the end of the pilgrimage becomes Self-Consciousness. And that distinction, represented by Self-Consciousness contrasted to Pure Consciousness is the meaning of our whole evolution, so far.