

Why-is this? Well, I say seems to pass, but why should we not say it does pass? Clock time is something different, why should clock time be the absolute measure of all time? All right, time does pass more quickly, it's simply that, you know, what we might call time, or what we might call subjective time, doesn't always exactly correlate with clock time. So, yes, one does have this experience that time move at the same pace all the time. In the same way your experience of space can be subjective. Sometimes you can feel very (sort of) cramped, perhaps you can feel quite expanded, even though there hasn't been any corresponding objective change. So it does seem that our mood, our emotional state, has some bearing on our perception of time, at least, and very likely space as well. You've all had the experience of five minutes seeming like several hours, especially if you were waiting for someone to turn up and she didn't turn up (laughter). And also you can have the experience of being absorbed in a fascinating book or even in the company of a fascinating person, and the time just seems to flash past. So why should this be? Perhaps it's rather interesting to ask yourself: what is it that causes for you time to pass, or seem to pass, most quickly? And the results might be quite interesting. Or when does time most drag for you. Anyway let's... what is the time, by the way? (laughter)

Vessantara: Well, it's nearly flashed by, it's three minutes to nine.

S: Have we any questions left?

Vessantara: We do have, yes.

S: So how many because...

Vessantara: One, two, three, four, five... about half a dozen.

S: So shall we be able to have another session?

Vessantara: Not until after the ordinations. Tomorrow is the Vajra- sattva special day, and then we start the ordinations the day after.

S: So what sort of questions are they? Weighty questions or is it difficult to tell?

Vessantara: I wouldn't have thought we'd get through them all now.

S: I think we'd better have one more, and leave the rest for another session which we'll have as soon as we can.

Vessantara: We still have Padmavajra's question about Tathagata-garbha. Do you want to save that for another day, or

S: Yes, I think we'll save that for another time... (laughter)

Abhaya: I'm not as happy with it as I was, but I'll have a go. I want to try and relate something you said in the lecture, this last lecture, with something you said in the question and answers a few (unclear) ago. In the lecture, and I quote, you say that... you're explaining a quote from the Diamond Sutra, and you say: "The Buddha is not really his physical body, not even his archetypal form. The Buddha is the Dharmakaya, the Buddha is, as it were, Reality." But my question is: Couldn't you say that the archetypal form is a meta- phor, in your sense of, and I quote: "a case of Reality being under

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certain special conditions"?

S: Yes, you can certainly say that. I mean it's a question of two different ways of looking at things, or two different approaches. Because obviously it isn't easy to express or to convey these things. For instance let's make it a bit simple: You've got, one might say, here Reality and there non-Reality. Let's use those terms. All right, Reality and non-Reality are quite distinct. So if you want to get to Reality you have to leave behind unReality. But you can also look at things in another way: unReality may be

unReality, but inasmuch as you can speak of, or think of, unReality at all it has a sort of quasi-existence. So what are you going to call that which is (as it were) Reality plus unReality? Is that a more (as it were) total Reality than (as it were) Reality by itself? This is really the crux of the whole matter.

So one does speak of the Dharmakaya as the ultimate Reality. So that leaves, say, the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya, or whatever corresponds to them, as less real, to say the least. But if one wants to think in terms of total Reality, or if one thinks of Reality as necessarily something total, well, should not, in a manner of speaking, the Dharmakaya include the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya? So one can look at it in those two ways: one can either regard the Ultimate Reality as Reality distinct from non-Reality, or one can regard Ultimate Reality as Reality plus non-Reality! Because we come (in a way) to the different degrees or levels of Sunyata where you've got (you know) the Unconditioned, which in a sense is Ultimate Reality after all, and you've got the conditioned - but then you've got the Maha-Sunyata, which embraces or comprises both of those. And therefore you have a Reality which is beyond Reality itself, and Ultimate Reality which is more ultimate than Ultimate Reality.

Here one is trying to deal with things, with Realities, which it's difficult to deal with in terms of human speech. But it would seem that if one thinks more (as it were) conceptually, then Ultimate Reality represents a total negation of all unReality (so to speak). But if one thinks, say, in terms of images, well then one can think in terms of, or even experience things, more metaphorically, as I've said. That is to say the archetype, to use this language, is implicit in the image. Ultimate Reality is implicit in lesser Reality, or even non-Reality. You see what I mean? So it's a question of either distinguishing Ultimate Reality from (let's say) relative Reality, or regarding Ultimate Reality as a totality of Reality and non-Reality. There are these two possible approaches.

So I think that sort of difference, that sort of distinction, underlies the question you've put. The question really is about that difference. I'm not so sure that it's two different ways of looking at things; it's more a question of two different modes of expression, with regards to Reality.

Abhaya: It just seemed, from what you were saying the other night, that to make such statements as "Ultimate Reality" didn't really have any meaning, and what you were positing was the Reality and the metaphor (sort of) overlapping...

S: Right. Yes.

Abhaya: ... in some kind of experience or other. That's where the meaning was.

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S: But, in a manner of speaking, in order to speak about Reality, one has to abstract it, in a way from things. But on the other hand, in reality, you can't do that. Reality is not abstracted from things, Sunyata is not different from dharmas. Not that it's the same as dharmas, but you have to speak of it as non-different from dharmas. Not that Reality as one thing, plus dharmas as another, make up the sum total of (so to speak) Ultimate Reality, so that sort of difficulty, that sort of mode of expression, that sort of way of looking at things, is probably best expressed in metaphorical terms - well, perhaps that isn't even the right way to put it. It's the metaphor more adequately reflects the true nature of the situation than does more abstract or more conceptual speech. Because of the very nature of the metaphor - that's something we'll have to go into a bit later on.

Abhaya: So that would mean, in traditional terms the Sambhogakaya form or the Nirmanakaya is much more healthy way of looking at things than, say, the Dharmakaya?

S: Yes. It's not that up there is the Dharmakaya, which is absolutely beyond you so you concentrate on the Sambhogakaya - no - it's not that. In a sense, yes, the Dharmakaya is a higher Reality so in a sense you leave behind the Sambhogakaya. But again in a sense, in a manner of speaking, you know, the Dharmakaya is the inner dimension of the Sambhogakaya itself. So you do not find, you know, the Dharmakaya by discarding the Sambhogakaya, but by going more deeply into the Sambhogakaya itself. And that is a way of putting it. Not that they are three exclusive Realities, the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya.

Abhaya: So what you're saying is that you can't really usefully talk about the Dharmakaya, apart from, in terms of, in some sense, the Sambhogakaya or the Nirmanakaya? It doesn't really have any meaning, conceptual or otherwise. Do you see what I mean?

S: Mmm. You can distinguish, but it is not that the Dharmakaya is, so to speak, a separate Reality

existing apart from the Sambhogakaya, which is not to say that the distinction is completely meaningless.

Abhaya: What does it mean then? Or what could one say...

S: Well, meaning that the Sambhogakaya itself contains, for want of a better term, an element, which is not expressible in terms of what we regard as the Sambhogakaya! But I think in a way the whole problem is created by this abstracting nature of conceptual language. And the use, I think, of metaphorical language gets round or obviates that particular difficulty. Anyway perhaps we'd better leave it there. We've got maybe a handful of questions for a bit later on.

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Session 13

Vessantara: These are from the Bodhisattva ideal series.

S: How many of those questions are there?

Vessantara: About four or five and then we have some relating to that section of the Ten Pillars. We will start with Padmavajra who has a Tathagata-garbha question.

Padmavajra: Why do you prefer to coin the phrase 'The Bodhisattva principle', to describe the potential for Enlightenment, rather than employ existing Buddhist terms such as Tathagata-garbha or Tathagata-dhatu?

S: I think one must remember that I gave that particular Thecture to a non-Buddhist audience and therefore I was concerned to avoid technical Buddhist terms as much as possible. In any case it also has to be said that within the Buddhist tradition itself the theory, to use that term, of Tathagata-garbha, at least, and the term garbha is used more than the term dhatu, has been a subject of considerable controversy. The expression, Tathagata-garbha appears comparatively late, it appears in a particular group of sutras, it appears especially in the Mahaparanirvana sutra, in Sanskrit that is, in the Sandhinirmocana sutra and in one or two other sutras. And there was a school of Tibetan Buddhism which was especially based on these particular texts, these particular sutras, the (Joronang ?) school, I think it was called. But a lot of Buddhists, even in ancient times, regarded the whole Tathagata-garbha theory or idea with grave suspicion. Mainly because it seemed that there was a danger of the Tathagata-garbha idea or theory or doctrine, being regarded as a sort of Atman theory or doctrine. Some of the sutras themselves in which the term occurs, in which the teaching occurs, do take note of this fact and they are often very concerned to deny that there is any resemblance between the Tathagata-garbha and the Atman of the Vedic schools. But none-the-less, sometimes the distinction is by no means clear, and I believe in one place, at least, the Buddha is represented as declaring that the distinction is so subtle that only the Enlightened can understand it. So therefore that would even suggest that the idea of Tathagata-garbha is not very helpful to the unenlightened because the unenlightened might mistake the garbha for the Atman. I personally take it that the garbha is not the Atman but I must also admit that the subtle distinction is not very easy to explain. In fact it has probably been approached in the wrong sort of way. I did go into all this in very general terms on more than one occasion, especially I think in the course of the Hui Neng seminar. What I said, more or less, on that occasion and on other occasions was this; that it is possible, according to all schools of Buddhism, for man to gain Enlightenment. That is to say man is potentially Enlightened, man therefore contains the potentiality for Enlightenment so you can than reify that concept of potentiality of Enlightenment and think of it as something that is actually there. A sort of entity, or if you like poetically a seed, and garbha literally translates as womb, or matrix but it really means something more like seed.

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So if you reify that concept in that sort of way you do land yourself into all sorts of metaphysical difficulties. And therefore I have on occasions said that even though one may use this sort of language in a poetic sort of fashion, when one is speaking more metaphysically, more philosophically it is better to stick to the formulations of early Buddhism, to what as far as we can see were the Buddhas own formulations as being simply in terms of 'the attainment of Enlightenment'. Speak simply in terms of 'in dependence upon A, B arises, in dependence upon B, C arises', and so on. But not speak in terms of a potentiality for Enlightenment, a sort of 'Buddha nature', actually existing within an individual as a sort of metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical, even pseudo-metaphysical entity. This whole subject of the Tathagata-garbha doctrine has been gone into in a book which is highly commended by scholars, but I must confess I have not read it, it, S in French not in English. I forget the exact title but it is by D.S. Ruegg, that's a Swiss-American scholar. I think it is simply called something something about the Tathagata-garbha doctrine, the doctrine of the Tathagata-garbha or something like that. It is listed in many bibliographies.

Padmavajra: So in the Survey, when you talk about faith, you talk about one's feelings, (I don't think you use the Tathagata-garbha there, sort of responding like a musical instrument responding to the Buddha, you should take that only in a poetic sense, not in any kind of metaphysical sense?

S: Well when one speaks of heart responding like a musical instrument, well clearly that is a figure of speech. One is speaking poetically, but I wouldn't like to say that one was speaking only poetically as though that was some inferior way of (?), if you see what I mean. But yes, one is using poetic rather than scientific language.

Vessantara: Could you say that the concept of Tathagata-garbha is a pseudo-solution to the pseudo-problem of the discontinuity between Samsara and Nirvana?

S: I don't really see how it is even a pseudo-solution, actually.

Vessantara: Well if Enlightenment is there reified as a potential, then as it grows it grows naturally into Enlightenment, so in that sense. ...

S: But then there would still be a discontinuity between That seed of Enlightenment and the 'soil', so to speak, in the form of the rest of the unenlightened personality within which it was imbedded. You would have the discrepancy not between the conditioned and the unconditioned, but within the individual himself. He would then have a sort of conditioned half and an unconditioned half, and how could these possibly add up to a single individual or a single personality. So there wouldn't really be any solution, you only would have transferred the solution. I think this is, in some ways, the basic metaphysical

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problem, from a spiritual point of view. The relationship between the, dare I say the unconditioned in the individual and the conditioned rest of him. But we won't go into that now. I personally prefer to steer rather clear of the Tathagata-garbha doctrine. To regard it from a respectful distance. I don't say anything against it, it is after all contained in Mahayana sutras but I think it isn't very useful to us at present. It can so easily be misunderstood. Again as I have explained at considerable length in that Hui Neng seminar and else where. Are people familiar with that seminar, has anyone listened to it?

Vessantara: I've read it.

S: It is transcribed. Do you remember those points?

Vessantara: I didn't remember all of them (?) I remember the strictures about (?)

S: I am not sure that I even used the term Tathagata-garbha, but I spoke of the reified Buddha-nature concept.

Vessantara: (?)

S: That's right, yes. Alright, let's go on then.

Kuladitya: This is a question which has been brought up before. I wondered if you would go into the difference between the Dharmakaya and the Dharmadhatu, and explain the difference between the two terms.

S: Yes. This does come into that diagram, doesn't it. That diagram of the Higher Evolution. Dharmakaya is part of the Trikaya doctrine. The Dharmakaya represents~that level, so to speak, of the Buddha's personality where he is at one with ultimate reality. If you take, say, the term Dharma as representing ultimate reality, the Buddha has realised that Dharma, that ultimate reality, it has in a manner of speaking become part of his personality. Or one might say that the Buddha, by virtue of his attainment of the Dharma has become the embodiment of the Dharmakaya. So the term Dharmakaya refers to the Buddha in as much as he is, or to the sense in which he is the embodiment of that Dharma.

In other words one might say that the term Dharmakaya is, in a sense, a psychological term. When I say psychological I am not using the word quite in the modern sense, I am using it to pertain to the experience of the individual. Dharmadhatu is not so much psychological as cosmological. Dharmadhatu is rather ultimate reality considered not as realised by the individual, that's the Dharmakaya, but as underlying the whole of conditioned existence. That is the Dharmadhatu. That is probably the simplest and easiest way of putting it.

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So that in that triangle, you may remember, the Dharmakaya comes right at the end of the hypotenuse, doesn't it. But the Dharmadhatu coincides with the point that I have marked in with the sign of, was it an X?

Vessantara: It was the point of the right angle.

S: That's it, the point of the right angle. Because That is where, as it were, subject and object coincide. It is where the psychological subject coincides with the cosmological object. So in that sense the Dharmadhatu is the ultimate reality that underlies everything, whereas the Dharmakaya is that ultimate reality as realised by the individual. This is really the basic difference.

Vessantara: You mentioned in one of the earlier question and answers that the Sambhogakaya has an association with the dream state. Is the Dharmakaya not sometimes associated with the state of deep sleep?

S: Yes, in the sense that in a state of deep sleep there is no experience of the subject/object distinction. That is in abeyance. And similarly in the Dharmakaya state there is no experience of that same distinction, but obviously there is a difference. It's as though in deep sleep you have sunk below that subject/object distinction whereas in the case of the realisation of the Dharmakaya you have risen above it. But there is that correspondence or analogy between the two, or sorry, in the (?)

Vessantara: T.,ThO have a point left over about metaphorical language. I'll read you the part again. You lead into it by saying that, 'speech or speaking metaphorically doesn't correspond to the truth, in a sense a metaphor embodies the truth. In a sense, in a very highly specialised form, in a very (limited ?) form, that is to say a metaphor under certain conditions, within a certain context, is reality.' A little later (?) expand on this. ' It is not that under certain special conditions a metaphor can be reality but that a metaphor is a case of reality being under certain special conditions.'

S: Yes, this seems quite clear. (laughter)

Vessantara: I'm not sure that is clear for everybody. ?)

S: Can you just slowly read that last little bit again. That at the end, what it is, and I will try to make that clear first.

Vessantara: A metaphor is a case of reality being under certain special conditions.

S: In a metaphor you have got difference and you have got similarity. I did think of an example after that particular discussion. Ahh yes, I remember now, the train of thought is coming back, I haven't really thought about

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these things since just after the discussion. I came across a rather interesting metaphor. It was something to this effect, it was in a German poet, a translation of a German poet that I was reading, a quotation just came quite incidentally in something else, in some other context. But it was something like that: 'With metal roof, the spire bloomed beneath the blue sky'. I might not have got it quite right. But the basic idea, the metaphor is that the steeple blooms or flowers. So what is the point of that metaphor, what is happening here? You have got two things; you have got the steeple which is an inanimate object. It's a piece of architecture. And you you have got a flower. And the poet is not saying that the steeple is like a flower, he is not saying that the steeple looks like a flower, he is saying that the steeple blooms. In other words the two ideas, so to speak, of something animate and something inanimate, something growing and something inert have been completely fused. Do you see what I mean? They have been brought together. So one could say, therefore, that one got a much deeper insight into the real nature of that spire. One had seen, thanks to this image or this metaphor or figure of speech, that the spire was not inert, as one had thought, it was not really inanimate, it was alive, as a flower is alive. That it was blooming. So by means of that metaphor you saw much more deeply into a particular thing, you had a much deeper insight into its reality. So one could say that reality disclosed itself, that is to say in this case the particular reality of the steeple disclosed itself under the form of, or in the terms that particular metaphor. And that that particular metaphor became a case of reality appearing under certain conditions. Do you see what I mean? So just read what I said at the very end there, and see if it makes a little more sense now.

Vessantara: 'Metaphor is a case of reality being under certain special conditions.'

S: Yes, so the special conditions, are the bringing together of the concept of the inanimate steeple and the animate flower in that way, by the metaphor. But the metaphor is not, as it were, something already existing underneath conditions which then becomes manifest. This is what I said the metaphor isn't in the previous bit. Do you see what I mean? Read that.

Vessantara: 'It is not that under certain special conditions the metaphor can be reality'.

S: Do you see the distinction now? So it's as though it's the conditions, to use that language, which is probably not the best language, which constitutes the metaphor, not that the metaphor appears under those conditions. You have got reality appearing through conditions, that is the metaphor, not the metaphor appearing under conditions, and that is, so to speak the metaphor. So you see generally what I am getting at, it probably needs all to be reformulated and put in different terms, in different language. But is that a bit clearer? A little while ago I saw a reference to an interesting book which I am going to try and get hold of, though it is

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probably out of print, it was published some years ago, called 'Metaphor is Reality'. That sounded rather interesting, I have no idea whether it does pursue the sort of line of thought that I have been pursuing or whether it is on a completely different track. But anyway I am going to try and get hold of it and look into the matter, it may be of interest. But do you see how metaphors do speak to us in this sort of way? To go back to that particular metaphor, the poet isn't almost arbitrarily joining or juxtaposing two different things. He is not saying, 'here we have got the steeple which is made of metal and there we have got the flower which is a living and growing thing, and yes in certain respects the one is like the other', he's not saying that. He doesn't see them in that way. He sees, as it were, the flower in the steeple and the steeple and the steeple in the flower, he sees them as interfused and therefore he can speak of the steeple blooming. The steeple assumes, for him, quite naturally the

attributes of the flower.

Padmavajra: Is this related to Coleridge's ideal poem, where he says there is a list of things he fuses. I can't remember it all exactly., I think -sameness and difference- and.., I can't remember the exact quote. It's as again this kind of...

S: I don't remember that quote but it could be that he Us on that sort of track.

Padmavajra: He starts off and brings the whole

S: But this isn't so much a question of opposites. Because one could say that the steeple and the flower, the inanimate object and the animate object are not opposites, but they are certainly different, and certainly those differences are, as it were, fused. So reality is revealed as a sort of fusion of differences, and even yes, a fusion of opposites. Perhaps this is something we need to follow up at some other time, perhaps I should sometime write a little paper on it or something of that sort. Anyway, let's carry on.

Shantivira: You say in the lecture that most non-Canonical Jatakas are derived from Indian folk-tales. Do we know the source of the Canonical Jatakas and what enables them to be accepted as Canonical?

S: When one speaks of Canonical Jatakas one means Jatakas which are found elsewhere in the Canon, especially the Pali Canon, elsewhere other than in the Jataka book itself. I go into this, actually, in this book which is coming out on Buddhist Canonical literature. In the Jataka book, which is one of the books of the Khuddaka Nikaya, it is only the verses which are actually Canonical. The stories are actually contained in the commentary. And it is the stories which are, so to speak, the Jataka stores proper, the Jataka stories themselves. Out of those stories which are found in the commentary only about, I think it is thirty two, are found elsewhere in the Canon. That is to say elsewhere in the Tripitika. There are a few Jataka stories in the Tripitika

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which are not found in the Jataka book, but really not very many. So when one speaks of Canonical Jataka stories one means those that are not simply included in the Jataka commentary, in those cases where they are included, but which are actually found in the body of the Tripitika itself. And it is remarkable that in those Canonical Jatakas that the Bodhisattva, that is to say the Buddha in his previous existences, is invariably depicted either as a sage, an ancient sage, or as a wise ruler. In the Canonical Jatakas he is never depicted or represented in any other way. Whereas of course in the non-Canonical Jatakas he is depicted as all sorts of beings, good bad and indifferent, even some- times as being an animal, being a monkey and so on.

Vessantara: Does it say something about the positive nature of Indian society at that time that there were so many folk-tales that were susceptible to being taken over and used as Buddhist...

S: Some of the stories, the Jataka stories are very, very amusing. And they are mostly very, very human and they very often have a moral even apart from their use within the framework of the Jataka story itself. Some of them show a deeply humanitarian spirit, a very noble spirit, one might say, very selfless spirit.

wL-Aracitta: These are non-Canonical are they?

S: This applies to both the Canonical and the non-Canonical ones. Some of the later Jatakas, those coming at the end of the Jataka book, are quite lengthy. They are the length of novellas, we might say. They are quite long and they are very, very readable indeed, even from a purely literary point of view. There is a book I read years ago by a Sinhalese scholar called the Jataka stories and the Russian novel. It was quite interesting stuff, he found several points of resemblance. Unfortunately I lent that book to someone and never got it back, so I don't have it now, but I reviewed it, there is a review of this book by me in one of the back issues of the Mahabodhi journal, written some twenty five years ago. It would be good to get hold of that book again if it is in print. Anyway, let's press on.

Vessantara: That's the end of the Bodhisattva lectures.