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Herbert Guenther
University of Saskatchewan

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The Re-Cognition of Being's Infrastructure as Self-Completion

Herbert Guenther

University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Wholeness as indivisible and the human being's connectedness with it are the abiding themes of the Buddhist experience-rooted and process-oriented thinking that goes by the name of rDzogs-chen. From its basically holistic point of view, the human being is a sub-whole, similar to a variation on a musical theme. From another point of view, however, based on the confusion of a compacted (and hence de-compactable) totality with wholeness, the human being is seen as being a reality that is internally divided and feels uncertain about who/what he really is. Together, the intolerable feelings of being divided and uncertain cause a yearning for wholeness and transcendence. Both wholeness and transcendence are realized in the face-to-face encounter with the experiencer's real being and its recognition.

Know thyself.

—Anonymous

Inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi

How little do we know that which we are!

How less what we may be!

—Lord Byron, *Don Juan*

All our knowledge is ourselves to know.

—Alexander Pope,

An Essay on Man: Epistle 4

*La vraie science et la vraie étude de l'homme, c'est
l'homme.*

—Pierre Charron, *Sagesse*

Translated by Alexander Pope, *An Essay on*

Man (2,1), as *The proper study of mankind is man*,

and by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,

Wahlverwandtschaften (2,4), as *Das eigentliche*

Studium der Menschheit ist der Mensch

IT IS interesting to note that the word *l'homme* used by the French theologian Pierre Charron (1541-1603), the principal expositor of the French essayist and skeptical philosopher Michel de Montaigne's (1533-1592) ideas, has been translated as *mankind* by Alexander Pope and *Menschheit* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, both translations giving the original French *l'homme* an abstract twist. Unfortunately the English word *mankind* has acquired a sexist connotation

opposed by some feminists. By contrast, the German word *Menschheit* does not have any sexist connotation, but the use of the word *Mensch* (from which the abstract noun *Menschheit* is derived) would, for a number of reasons, go against the grain of English language purists. I shall, however, use the words *man* and *men*, where necessary, in their generic sense to include both men and women. Concerning the pronouns *he* and *she* and their related *his* and *her*, I shall use *he/his* generically, and *she/her* specifically.

Every statement has been made by someone who is always something more than what we assume him to be. There is about him, as about every word we speak, an aura of the unexpressed that, apart from causing much confusion, links him with a dimension that is larger than the one, the anthropic, to which he is habituated. This larger one we shall call the cosmic dimension. Together with and inseparable from the "smaller" anthropic dimension, is the "larger" dimension which I shall call the cosmic dimension. Summed up in the single abstract noun *anthropocosmism* that, like all *-isms*, is an ugly word, it yet expresses a profound idea. This abstract noun's two root words are: (1) the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning "Man" in the sense of the German word

Mensch, and as such quite distinct from the Greek word *anēr* meaning man as a gendered being; and (2) the Greek word *kosmos*, (Anglicized as *cosmos* and turned into an adjective as *cosmic*), meaning order. What is particularly interesting about this anthropocosmic worldview is that it is grounded in itself, and that out of this ground, about which nothing can be said without contradiction, there emerges an overall reality. From the perspective of its inherent dynamic, this reality is the whole's (Being's) closure onto itself that in its closure remains open to wholeness.

It is in the definition of reality that the twin notions of order and structure gain added significance. Usually we tend to conceive of these twin notions as involving some permanence and rigidity, all the time being oblivious to the fact that they are formalized results of processes that initiated and sustained them within the context in which they occurred. On closer inspection, however, both order and structure turn out to be basically dynamic. But regardless of whether we, by habituation, use the seemingly static notions of order and structure or, by preference, their more dynamic versions of ordering and structuring, we are faced with the deeper question of how this ordering and structuring, as an interweaving of forces, has come about. If, for argument's sake, we conceive of our universe as overtly ordered and presenting a distinct structure, we may speak of its covert dynamic as being of the nature of a suborder, presenting itself as the infrastructure of the overt order and structure. Ordering and structuring presupposes an intelligence, creating a new worldview and illuminating it in the strict sense of these words. It cannot, therefore, be reduced to and equated with a quantitatively measurable facet of some solitary ego with its limited intellectual horizon (IQ).¹

To the rDzogs-chen thinkers belongs the credit of being the first to notice an important difference between two kinds of intelligence. One is pervasive of Being-*qua*-being (and, implicitly, our own being by virtue of our being-*qua*-body as an integral aspect of Being-*qua*-being); the other is an intelligence that is a tight rationality locked up in an ego and measurable in terms of its intensity as a low-level, medium-level, and high-level "quality." The key terms in Tibetan for this difference are *rig-(pa)* and *ma-rig-(pa)*,

respectively. As concepts by intuition, a "seeing from within" in the immediacy of experience, these are thoroughly dynamic and, on closer inspection, reveal the inadequacy of their current so-called translations.

Let us start with the term *ma-rig-(pa)*, whose extended meaning is given as *khul-pa* "errancy," or "going astray (into mistaken identification)." From this it follows that *ma-rig-(pa)* can by no means be equated with our notion of ignorance as a denial of knowledge. Rather, what this term intends is to draw our attention to the fact that what is so designated is not quite (*ma*) what it should or might be, namely, *rig-(pa)*. Turning to the rDzogs-chen definitions of *ma-rig-(pa)*, we find that it is not something solitary, but is one feature working in complicity with two other features. It gives its "name" to this complexity that we tend to conceive of as a simplex and, ultimately, as the source of our enworldedness. Thus we are told:²

In the animate beings

Emotionality (*nyon-mongs*) and unexcitability (*ma-rig*) prevail:

Their founding stratum is the aggregate of patterns,

Their locale is between the lungs and the heart.

(The above) has three features:

Unexcitability (*ma-rig-pa*), mentality (*sems*), and the egological self (*gid*).

Unexcitability is never alone,

(Its attendant feature) mentality gathers all the sedimentations of past experiences as causes for future experiences,

Which obscure and veil [the living system's] ordinary awareness [or *Urwissen*], and

(Its attendant feature) the egological self introduces a split between itself (as subject) and its cognitive domain (as object),

Whereby it obscures and veils the very lighting-up of [the living system's] supraconscious ecstatic intensity.

Lumping these three features together

One speaks of them as unexcitability, and

This is the "stuff" of which samsara is made.

In it the five poisons and the six (referents of one's) anger

As the sum total of the emotions and sedimentations of past experiences as causes of future experiences are located.

Before proceeding with an explication of the salient topics in the above quote, three more quotations that deal with this unitrinity called

“unexcitability” in its “errancy mode” (*khurul-pa*) may be adduced. The one tells us:³

Although in Being-*qua*-being there are no such features as errancy or non-errancy,
It is when [its] ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*) comes to be active that the egological self (*gid*) becomes agitated and the [system’s] mentality (*sems*) goes astray,
Whereby, not recognizing the reality of its *Dasein*, [the system’s very] ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*) becomes [its] unexcitability (*ma-rig*).
Losing its head, this ecstatic intensity, no longer holding to its legitimate dwelling,
Does not recognize (its) creativity (source)⁴ and strays into the darkness that is samsara, [in which case]
Errancy that is the belief in something to be what it is not, takes over
And from it all the beings in the six life-forms embark on their going astray.

The other has this to say:⁵

Unexcitability’s flickering is sort of (Being’s) ecstatic intensity.
Although, actually, (this unexcitability’s flickering) is the inner dynamic (*rtsal*) of (Being’s) ecstatic intensity,
It becomes the egological self (being carried away) by (its own) motility (acting as the egological self’s) horse.

And the last one states:⁶

The “stuff” mentality is made of is its unexcitability;
Its inner dynamic is its unceasing belief in duality, and
Its ostensible functioning is its being engaged in joy as well as in sadness.

In the first quotation, that initiated the subsequent quotations with their emphasis on *ma-rig-pa* as a corollary of mentality (*sems*) and the egological self (*gid*), the “aggregate of patterns” refers to the experiencer’s “physical” situatedness. It does so in the sense that one is a preeminently visible and tangible pattern among other visible and tangible patterns with which interaction occurs. In the narrower sense of the word “situatedness,” one is the site on which emotionality and unexcitability determine one’s specific aliveness. This aliveness’ specific features are the lungs and the heart. In the first place, there are the lungs, intimating breathing as the

whole system’s motility. Figuratively speaking, this motility may get out of control and, like a panic-stricken horse, may carry its rider, *ma-rig-pa*, ever farther away from a state of authentic being. In the second place, there is the heart, intimating, again figuratively speaking, the fact that one who has no heart also cannot think, in the same way as an unthinking person has no heart to make him feel with and about others.

In the quotations following the introductory one the emphasis is more on the underlying, if not to say, inner dynamic of the going astray into unexcitability and unexcitedness that is the hallmark of an ordinary living being. Such a being is aptly termed in Tibetan *sems-can*, meaning “(someone) being of the nature of (*can*) mentality/mentation (*sems*).” In plain English, that is someone having opinions, but not necessarily knowledge. In passing it may be pointed out that there is an enormous difference between what in Tibetan is called *sems-can* and in Sanskrit *sattva*. The Tibetan term reflects a worldview that bases itself on the *Geistigkeit des Seins* (Being’s mental-spiritual nature); the Sanskrit equivalent *sattva*, a relatively late derivative from the verbal root *as*—“to be,” “to exist”—reflects a worldview that bases itself on the palpable and/or the “material.” This inner dynamic (*rtsal*) may be conceived of as the anthropocosmic whole’s functionality that, precisely because it is never at rest, is ambivalent. Through its functioning “things may go wrong,” which means that its optimal “ecstatic intensity” (*rig-pa*) may slip into its nonoptimal intensity, that is, an intensity and/or “excitability that is not quite what it could be” (*ma-rig-pa*). This means that a concrete living individual, the ubiquitous experiencer, is a malfunction that just happens “by itself” (*rang-byung*) with no external agent or agency being involved or even required. By the same logic, this “by itself” inner dynamic is self-regulatory which, with respect to the concrete living individual, means that “something can be done” to restore, if this is the appropriate word, the functioning’s optimal intensity that is felt to express itself in gracefulness of movement, vivacity, agility, lissomness, and its pervasive luster and radiance.

Accordingly, in an impressive passage that already foreshadows the importance of self-cognition as a *re*-cognition of what we really are, we are told:⁷

Although with respect to [Being-*qua*-being] there are no such (statuses as) an ordinary sentient being (*sems-can*) and an *erlichtet* (spiritually alight) one,
 It is suffocated [and hampered in its being itself] by the snare of (one's) dichotomic thinking (that is the hallmark of one's) unexcitability.
 Since it is difficult to remove this stain (put on Being-*qua*-being) by dichotomic thinking,
 It is important to deal with it in a practical manner proceeding step by step.
 Although (the whole's) originary awareness (*ye-shes*) is present in (the whole's closure onto itself) mentation (*sems*),
 It will not radiate as long as it is not cultivated ["polished"];
 Although oil has been pervasively present since (Being's) beginningless beginning
 In a sesame seed or a mustard seed,
 It will not come forth as long as either seed is not pressed;
 Although milk is by nature butter,
 It will not become butter as long as it is not churned;
 Even if seeds are lying in the soil,
 How will they ever ripen into a crop
 If no farming is done?
 In the same manner, all the features that constitute one's reality
 Are present in (what is) a living being's *Existenz*⁸
 (and)
 Although they have been, since time before time, the impetus of one's becoming *erlichtet*,
 How will one realize (Being's) symbolic pregnancy (as) the outcome
 Without dealing with them practically, step by step,
 By means of an imaging process that moves from the external to the internal.⁹
 Although (Being's) originary awareness is, (in showing) its face,¹⁰ versatile,
 It is unable to rise in its four objectively [visibly and feelingly] experienceable intensities¹¹
 Unless [its self-imposed] deceptions are step by step brought under control.
 When in this process the originary awareness that has risen
 Encounters its real being in (Being's) ecstatic intensity that is its very "stuff,"
 Whatever has risen [as a presence] dissolves like the coils of a snake (uncoiling).
 This rising (as an "objectively" seen and felt presence) and its dissolving that occur simultaneously, do not involve a subject (as their agents),

The [seemingly] ecstatic intensity and the welter of dichotomies do not involve a subject (as their agents);
 The phenomenal and its interpretation dissolve [in the higher order of their] understanding, (and)
 Through (the whole's) cognitiveness having become relaxed all problems dissolve.¹²
 By having (one's) Dasein brought under control one knows (what Dasein) is (in showing) its face.

After this excursion into and exegesis of *ma-rig-(pa)* as *rig-(pa)* at its lowest level, a similar excursion into and exegesis of *rig-(pa)* at its highest or penultimately highest level, is now called for. To highlight the difference of *ma-rig-(pa)* from *rig-(pa)* I render *rig-(pa)* hermeneutically as "supraconscious ecstatic intensity." Here, intensity is meant to describe the whole's excitability and excitation that is ek-static (ecstatic) by virtue of its "standing" (static) "outside" (ek-, ec) the ego's narrowly circumscribed confines; hence, it is also "supraconscious." The implication is twofold. The first implication is that *rig-(pa)* is basic or, as the rDzogs-chen texts would say, pervasive of the whole. This is the case, whether from the perspective of the ever-present experiencer, from that of the whole itself, or from that of the experiencer as the whole's closure onto itself; hence *rig-pa* is "stable" (not to be confused with "stagnant"). The other is that *rig-(pa)* is "unstable" (not to be confused with "inconstant" and/or "unbalanced") and hence "creative" in opening up new and fresh visions. It is in-between these extremes, that of "lack of excitability and mental-spiritual intensity" (*ma-rig-pa*), and that of "supraconscious ecstatic intensity" (*rig-pa*), that an "inner dynamic" exists. It is inseparable from the whole, and yet defies any reduction to it. It is at work, and gives rise to either extreme, the one, as we have already seen, a sort of alienation *from*; the other, as we shall see, an approximation *to*, what just *is*. About the latter we are told:¹³

The "stuff" the supraconscious ecstatic intensity is made of is its irrealization [of what is deemed to be "real"],¹⁴
 Its inner dynamic is its discriminatively appreciative capacity par excellence, and
 Its ostensible functioning is its being engaged in nonduality.

This quote relates the supraconscious ecstatic intensity to nonduality that is descriptive of the immediacy of experience. It also introduces another key term of Buddhist thought that has been sadly misunderstood, and still continues to make a farce of what the Buddhist thinkers had to say.¹⁵ This key term is, in Tibetan, *shes-rab*, and, in Sanskrit *prajñā*. Its analytically discerning, discriminatively appreciative character, reflecting the basically positive and wholesome/healthy outlook of what goes by the name of Buddhism, can be traced back to its earliest stratum and was never forgotten. It even gained added significance in the context of lived-through experience, as may be gleaned from its specification by par excellence (Tib. *chen-po*). Notwithstanding its importance and the high esteem in which it was held, *shes-rab* is not some solitary or abstract phenomenon; rather it is a multifaceted “operation” with respect to the phenomenality of what we eventually call “world.” By “world” is meant an expression of the inner dynamic (*rtsal*) of the whole’s *in*-formation/self-organizing dynamic (*thig-le*), in whose encounter as a re-cognition of what we “really” are, three kinds of *shes-rab* play a significant role. Thus we are told:¹⁶

The inner dynamic of (Being’s) *in*-formation/
self-organizing dynamic concerning
(Being’s) lighting-up in an ultimate sense
(as the phenomenality of world)
Involves an “invariant” *shes-rab*,
An “unceasing” *shes-rab*, and
A “transsubjective” *shes-rab*.
By coming face-to-face with these three kinds
of *shes-rab* [and re-cognizing them as one’s
creativity]
One irrealizes the very now [and here of their
projections mistaken as “realities”].

The same text continues presenting a variation on the above theme, first by specifying *rig-pa* as autonomous, (as not depending on anything other than itself and hence self-reflexive, *rang-rig*); and then by elaborating it in terms of its “stuff,” its thereness, and its functioning:¹⁷

This *rang-rig* involves the triad of its “stuff,”
its thereness, and its functioning:
Its “stuff” is this *rang-rig* as auto-
luminescence,
Its thereness is its not having an eigenbeing,
and
Its functioning is the triad of *shes-rabs*—
A *shes-rab* that is without a beginning,

A *shes-rab* that maintains its flow, and
A *shes-rab* that irrealizes [what is deemed to
be “real”].

By coming face-to-face with these three kinds
of *shes-rab* [and re-cognizing them to be our
creativity]

This *rig-pa* dissolves in (what is Being’s)
originary awareness modes in their
ultimate sense.

It would exceed the space and scope of this disquisition to go into the details of the relationship of these three kinds of *shes-rab* to the three fore-structures (*sku gsum*) of the concrete individual, and into their hierarchical order—referred to in terms of the external, the internal, and the arcane. Suffice it to refer to its being inextricably interwoven with such other aspects of psychic life as *rig-pa* and *ye-shes*, as evidenced by the following quotation:¹⁸

Since *rig-pa* and *ye-shes* are such that neither
the one nor the other can be added to or
abstracted from each other,
Efficacy (*thabs*) is unceasing *ye-shes*, and
Critically appreciative acumen (*shes-rab*) is
unalterable *ye-shes*.

Efficacy and critically appreciative acumen are mutually enhancing in the sense that, the more critically appreciative (*shes-rab*) I become of a given situation, the better I can deal with it; and the better I can deal with the situation (*thabs*), the deeper becomes my appreciation of what the situation holds for me. Eventually and imperceptibly both will fuse with my, the participatory ubiquitous experiencer’s, nonegological and nonegocentric originary awareness modes (*ye-shes*). These, in presenting themselves, can be geometrically “seen” as an almost circular design (or Being’s incipient closure onto itself). The design has no planes of weakness, because none of the sutures lie opposite each other; it can be holistically conceived of as a kind of *Urwissen*, a higher-order cognitiveness whose inspiring and enlivening power and intrinsic intensity are *rig-pa*. It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that in this supraordinary, imaginal dimensionality or realm we come across a plethora of process pointers, such as *shes-rab*, *ye-shes*, *rig-pa*, *rang-rig*, *rig-pa’i ye-shes*, *rtsal*. All of these are suggestive of a still deeper or higher “reality” that we ascertainably “feel” deep within us, in our closure as the unlimited whole’s “core intensity” (*snying-po*). But if we live in an environing reality

that is imaginal through and through, we too as an integral aspect of this reality are and experience ourselves as imaginal through and through. This imaginal quality, as pervasive of what we, as embodied beings, cannot but analytically refer to as our body-mind syndrome, is in the usual code diction of this literary genre succinctly expressed in the following passage:¹⁹

In particular, this *rig-pa* in its functionality as *ye-shes* (*rig-pa'i ye-shes*)
Pervades all embodied beings (*lus-can*), (and)
In particular, dwells in the following
("physical") locations:
The heart, the veins, the cerebrum, and
The eyes, together forming an immeasurably
large (palatial) mansion.
It is in this (mansion) that this *ye-shes* par
excellence (*ye-shes-chen-po*) dwells. [To
restate the above in terms of the "imaginal"
expressing itself in direct experience:]²⁰
In the body (*lus*) of all embodied beings
The *tsitta*, the *dung-khang*, the *rtsa*, and the
sgo
Are the locations of the *rig-pa*.

Mind/mentality (*sems*), too, is this *rig-pa's* own inner dynamic [which is to say]:

[Being's] openness-nothingness-"stuff" (*ngo-bo*) (as) mind/mentality is a brightness with no trace (of brightness) in it.
[Being's] own most unique ability-to-be (*rang-bzhin*) (as) mind/mentality is a radiance-(estatic) intensity-nothingness,
[Being's] suprasensual concern (*thugs-rje*) (as) mind/mentality is an intangibility as to subtleness and coarseness.
Mind/mentality is, (as far as its) creating dichotomies (goes), radiant, but (as far as its) openness-nothingness-"stuff" (goes,) (it is) a voiding:
[In this respect] it does not present a duality of itself and *rig-pa*;
[Rather,] in the body as a value (*rin-chen-lus*)²¹
It is (its) sole, holistically pervasive mind/mentality.
(Its) openness-nothingness-"stuff" in its voiding-cum-radiating (*stong-gsal*) abides as [the experiencer's] corporeal pattern (*sku*);
(Its) own most unique ability-to-be in its radiating-cum-voiding (*gsal-stong*) (abides as) the luminosity that is its [the experiencer-qua-system's] in-formation/self-organizing dynamic (*thig-le'i 'od*);²²
(Its) suprasensual concern in its lighting-up-cum-voiding (*snang-stong*) (abides as) a shining lamp.²³

After a lengthy discussion of the luminous-sonorous imagery emerging in the imaginal dimension of the experiencer's psychic reality, the author links this seemingly "static," horizontally seen landscape, with its "dynamic," vertically-hierarchically organized unfolding in the experiencer's growth process. The following quotation should make this clear:²⁴

rig-pa is precisely the three ("seen and felt") fore-structures (*sku*) [of one's embodied being]:
[In its capacity of its] voiding with no cessation involved (*stong-pa 'gag-med*) it is (one's being a) *chos-sku*;
[In its capacity of its] radiating-cum-voiding (*gsal-stong*) with no subjectivity involved (*'dzin-med*) it is (one's being a) *longs-sku*;
[In its capacity of its] intensity-cum-inner dynamic (*rig-rtsal*) with no cessation involved (*'gag-med*) it is (one's being a) *sprul-sku*;
(To restate it briefly:) the non-cessation (*'gag-med*) of (a) voiding-cum-radiating (*stong-gsal*) [is what is meant by] *rig-pa*.

rig-pa, by virtue of being invariance (*'gyur-ba-med*),²⁵ is the starting point [of one's spiritual growth and journey through life] (*gzhi*),
rig-pa, by virtue of being noncessation (*'gag-pa-med*), is the way (as one's going) (*lam*);
rig-pa, by virtue of being self-reflexivity (*rang-rig*) is (a) voiding (*stong-pa*), (and this triunity)
Is called the climax/goal (*'bras-bu*).

We now have all the key terms and/or ideas that go into the making of what is the emergent experiencer's tacit infrastructure. Being itself a process that, temporally speaking, has neither a beginning nor an end, and, spatially speaking, neither a center nor a periphery, it has been described as involving three phase spaces that language can express only in a linear fashion. Moreover, our language is so steeped in the Aristotelian categories that we fail to realize that our "adjectives" (accidentals with respect to nouns) are rather "adverbs" that cannot be abstracted from the process. The three verbal/adverbial terms, as listed in the original texts, are

stong gsal rig-(pa)/kun-khyab.

Here *kun-khyab* ("all-pervasive") means that what all three terms stand for is mutually

pervasive. In the process of their experience they become expressed in the formula

stong-gsal gsal-stong rig-stong/snang-stong.

Here *snang-stong* (“a lighting-up of what becomes and is the phenomenal that yet remains ‘nothing’”) describes, in mathematical terms, a symmetry break in Being’s perfect symmetry. The break comes when, as we might say, Being starts closing in onto itself, which is tantamount to saying that the cosmic becomes anthropocosmic, with emphasis on its anthropic (“human”) aspect. The result is that a subtle and yet decisive change in Being’s infrastructure occurs and henceforward affects the framework in which we are about to understand ourselves, and in which our actions are going to be carried out. This “new” (substantial) formula is the triad (unitrinity) of

ngo-bo rang-bzhin thugs-rje.

The literal meaning of *thugs-rje* is “spirit/spirituality being the lord.” As such, it is more than one’s petty ego, with its diminished cognitive-mental-spiritual intensity (*ma-rig-pa*), and hence more of the nature of *rig-pa*, if not to say, identical with it. It expresses itself in its human context as a “suprasensual concern” for what is the phenomenal (*snang-ba*), and deals with it from its supraconscious ecstatic intensity level, that is the infrastructure’s *rig-pa*.

While this “suprasensual concern” for all that comes into the orbit of the vision and other senses, stresses the individual’s cognitive side, it is matched by his “circumspective concerned activity” (*phrin-las*). This, far from being narrowly circumscribed, is more in the nature of what we might call “free play” (*rol-pa*) and in this respect is quite different from what is called “games.” In the usual sense, “games” turn Juvenal’s (c. 55–c.130 C.E.) dictum of *mens sana in corpore sano* (“a healthy mind in a healthy body”) into its travesty of *mens insana in corpore defatigato* (“an insane mind in a tired body”) if not a *corpore mutilato* (“mutilated body”). The association of an individual’s circumspective and concerned activity with play lets the above mentioned formula now read as follows:²⁶

ngo-bo rang-bzhin rol-pa.

This idea of play as specific to the individual’s circumspective and concerned activity, which

adds gracefulness to one’s dealings with others, calls to mind the German poet Friedrich von Schiller’s challenging pronouncement.²⁷

Denn, um es endlich auf einmal herauszusagen, der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Wortes Mensch ist, und er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt

(Therefore, to state it finally and once and for all, Man only plays when, in the strict sense of the word, he is Man(-*qua-man*), and he is only Man(-*qua-man*) when he plays).
[Emphasis in the original]

More than two centuries later, the physicist David Bohm and the scientist and writer F. David Peat took up the idea of “thought as play” and noted that:

Unfortunately, however, our English language does not have a word for thought which *plays true*. Perhaps this is a reflection of a work ethic which does not consider the importance of play and suggests that work itself is noble while play is, at best, recreational and, at worst, frivolous and nonserious. (Bohm & Peat, 2000, p. 48)

As these two authors also point out:

This notion of falseness that can creep into the play of thought is shown in the etymology of the words *illusion*, *delusion*, and *collusion*, all of which have as their Latin root *ludere*, “to play.” So *illusion* implies playing false with perception; *delusion*, playing false with thought; *collusion*, playing false together in order to support each other’s illusions and delusions. (p. 48)

Other modern writers emphasize the relationship of the word “play” to the erotic and unduly narrow its broad meaning (Huizinga, 1955, p. 43; Ackerman, 1999, p. 8).

Again, it is Padmasambhava who, centuries before the above Western writers noted that play can be *true* and *false*, spoke in terms of its having a symbolic character as well as a samsaric one:²⁸

(Play’s) division is twofold:
Symbolically (speaking), (Being’s) creativity is a play;
Samsarically (speaking), (one’s) subjectivity/individuality is a play.

He then elaborates this aphorism by placing it into the context of Being’s (the whole’s) inner dynamic (*rtsal*), that apart from its playfulness (*rol-pa*) also manifests itself in its “ornamentation” (*rgyan*). The point to note is that for him

samsara is not *eo ipso* negative (as usually claimed); it becomes negative when “something goes wrong” in what is said to be Being’s inner dynamic, that, in the last analysis, is ourselves as its experiencers according to the degree of our mental/spiritual capacity.

In passing, it may be pointed out that the two formulas run as

ngo-bo rang-bzhin thugs-rje

and

ngo-bo rang-bzhin rol-pa

are supplemented by a third formula that runs as

ngo-bo rang-bzhin mtshan-nyid.

Although this formula is first found in a work by or attributed to Śrīsimha,²⁹ a contemporary of Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, it does not figure at all in the available works pertaining to this early phase of rDzogs-chen thought, but seems to have gained prominence in circles that were inclined to thematization-speculation.³⁰ The word *mtshan-nyid*, meaning “that which makes (*nyid*) specific characteristics (*mtshan/mtshan-ma*) to be specific characteristics,” is usually used as a summary designation of the epistemology-oriented philosophical systems that somehow can be said to be frozen phase spaces of something very much alive and thoroughly dynamic.³¹ Its original dynamic intention is well expressed by Padmasambhava:³²

mtshan-nyid is determined to be threefold:
mtshan-nyid as (Being’s) lighting-up is
 (Being’s) auto-lighting-up;
mtshan-nyid as (Being’s) Dasein is (Being’s)
 birthlessness;
mtshan-nyid as (Being’s) errancy is
 The belief in (Being’s) supraconscious ecstatic
 intensity and (its) egological closure
 forming a duality.

In view of the fact that the terms *Dasein* (*gnas-lugs*) and eigenbeing (*rang-bzhin*) are used synonymously, and refer to the emergence of our individuality-*qua*-individuality or what we “really” are, the emphasis placed on (our) eigenbeing results in the formulas

rang-bzhin ngo-bo thugs-rje

and

rang-bzhin ngo-bo mtshan-nyid.

The emergence of *rang-bzhin* (or, stated differently without changing the basic idea, the *rang-bzhin* becoming the “foreground” against its “background”), or the whole’s nothingness-openness (*ngo-bo*) from a dynamic perspective, also marks the unfolding of the originary awareness modes (*ye-shes*). The relationship between *rang-bzhin* and *mtshan-nyid* can be therefore stated, in modern phenomenological diction, as the founding (*rten*) and the founded (*brten*), implying, in the technical language of rDzogs-chen thinking, the inseparability of structure (*sku*) and function (*ye-shes*).

In any case, the interactive dynamic between *ngo-bo* and *rang-bzhin* is, (as far as we can say anything about what must be experienced in order to be known) the very “stuff” we are made of. It is this which, as the very infrastructure of concepts, ideas, intuitions, and values, impels us to learn more about ourselves. This task is summed up in a single term, *ngo-sprod*. Literally it means a “coming face-to-face with (one’s self/Self),” this self/Self being, in its irreducibility to anything other than itself, a Mystery. It is a task for which no human being has ever been able to find a word or name, and which, in its mind-boggling “giving itself (to us),” explodes us out of our conceptuality prison and enriches us beyond measure. Listen to Padmasambhava’s explication of this term:³³

By showing its face to itself giving (itself to itself) is (its) receiving.

This giving and receiving are not two different acts; rather, the giving gives without holding back, which means that it gives itself and becomes selfless (as usually understood or misunderstood). And, in this giving up of itself, it opens itself up to receiving what may be given to it. And what may be given intimates its visibility by virtue of its showing of itself. This process, in turn, relates to our visual and visionary capacity that, far from being “merely” receptive, is also preeminently creative. In this sense, seeing is not believing; it is knowing, and as a creative act it outgrows its everyday mode of seeing that in its subject-object structure merely reflects the petty ego’s need for security, an obsession shared by politicians and metaphysicians alike. It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that in the many synonyms for *ngo-sprod*, seeing and knowing play a significant role in pointing out that “self-

knowledge” is not a spectator sport. Such synonyms are:³⁴

“Seeing (one’s) nothingness-openness” (*ngo-bo mthong-ba*); “knowing (one’s) face” (*rang-ngo shes-pa*); “knowing Being (as) the reality (that we are)” (*gzhi’i don shes-pa*); (cognitively ecstatic) intensity (as [one’s] existential) meaning-rich (spiritual) forestructure (as [one’s] deeply felt) understanding (*rig-pa chos-sku rtogs-pa*);³⁵ “to see (one’s) existential reality (to be) infallible” (*don ma-nor-ba mthong-ba*), [all of which] is “(Being’s) binding communication in showing one’s intelligence’s functionality” (*rang-gi mtshan-nyid bstan-pa’i gdams-ngag*).³⁶

In view of the fact that Buddhist thinkers were fond of numbers, the text, not unexpectedly, continues listing seven procedures to come face-to-face with what we are and to know, rather than to opine about, the mystery that we are and that challenges us to fathom it. However, it should be borne in mind that the use of numbers is not primarily meant to itemize what is under consideration, but rather to bracket related ideas within the complexity of their anthropocosmic worldview. According to the manner in which we go about “counting things,” the numbers range from three to twenty-one “encounters” (*ngo-sprod*) that, in one way or another, can be reduced to the most favored number three. It also should be noted that this “numbers game” varies with the different schools of Buddhism.³⁷

Let us begin with the “threefold” approach and follow it up with excursions into its ramifications. Its process character is unmistakable as it moves from the “external” (*phyi*) through the “internal” (*nang*) into the “arcane” (*gsang*), which is mysterious or a mystery for those unable (and maybe unwilling) to break out of their enframing in the commonplace, (the *Gestell* in Martin Heidegger’s probing terminology). Though the “arcane” may, for simplicity’s sake, be conceived of as the “end” of the process, the very nature of a process counters this assumption, since it is such that it never ends. In order to intimate this never-ending, language cannot but speak of an “arcane more arcane than the arcane” (*yang-gsang*) and run the risk of falling prey to its own thingification. Padmasambhava is quite explicit in stating that each successive encounter is meant to transcend the preceding one. This transcending is likened to crossing a mountain pass (*la zla-ba*) that somehow, figuratively speaking, stands between us in our

closure and us as openness. Padmasambhava’s words, emphasizing the anthropic implication, are:³⁸

The encounter with each topic in the triad of the external, the internal, and the arcane Is meant as transcending each (of its limits in order to effect one’s)
Linkage with what vision means.
Encountering the external means
Re-cognizing the phenomenal as the dimensionality where meanings are stored and in *statu nascendi*;
Encountering the internal means
Re-cognizing it as (Being-in-its-closure-onto-itself’s) two patterned manifestations;³⁹
Encountering the arcane means
Recognizing it as (Being’s) supraconscious ecstatic intensity as being (us as presenting a) structure that is meaning through and through (*chos-sku*).

Elsewhere he speaks of this encounter as one’s re-cognizing oneself from an cosmo-ontology-oriented perspective:⁴⁰

The *ngo-sprod* is threefold:
Encountering (Being in its) Dasein (*gnas-lugs*) is re-cognizing it as being invariant,
Encountering (Being in its) lighting-up (*snang-tshul*) is re-cognizing it as being indeterminate;
Encountering (Being in its) duality (of its being invariant as (one’s/its) Dasein and indeterminate as (its) lighting-up) is re-cognizing it as being non-dual.

The number three occurs again in the syllogistic presentation of the *ngo-sprod* that runs as follows:⁴¹

A river, a mirror, and a crystal ball are the analogies of *ngo-sprod*,
The *chos-sku*, the *longs-sku*, and the *sprul-sku* are the substance of the *ngo-sprod*,
[Being’s] thinking’s thinking (*sems-nyid*),
[Being’s] creativity (*chos-nyid*), and
[Being’s] originary awareness as functions of its supraconscious ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa’i ye-shes*) are the rationale of the *ngo-sprod*.

A few explicatory remarks concerning this aphorism may not be out of place. For our binary mode of thinking, caught in the impasse of matter/material as more or less static and mind/mental as more or less dynamic, the first two lines pose a problem because, according to rDzogs-chen thinking, they are on the side of what we would call the “material.” Certainly, we have no

difficulty in assessing a river, a mirror, and a crystal ball as material objects and, with some stretching of our imagination, the *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku* as mental objects. Unfortunately this facile assessment misses the point. The river, the mirror, and the crystal ball are images of movement: the river flows on and on; the mirror ceaselessly reflects and, more importantly, reveals; and the crystal ball never stops shimmering in all the colors of the spectrum. By contrast, the *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku* are images of rest in the sense that they describe our existentiality as remaining the same under all conditions and in all circumstances. Only the third line can be said to be “mental,” providing we do not reduce it to something egological and turn it into another thing by our ego’s thingifying thinking.

The thrust of what is designated by the term *ngo-sprod* that, strictly speaking, defies any reductionist translation, is in the direction of understanding by coming face-to-face with what we really are and in so doing re-cognizing ourselves. This experience is the dissipation (*sangs*) of the darkness of one’s re-presentational mode of thinking, and as such a spreading (*rgyas*) of the light of one’s *Urwissen* (*ye-shes*).⁴² As an experience, *sangs-rgyas* is never a commercial Buddhathing (to be roused from its sleep, whatever this and similar slogans may mean); it has no name (*ming-med*), and its encounter-cum-re-cognition (*ngo-sprod*) allows itself to be expressed only in images of symbolic pregnance:⁴³

There is the profound instruction⁴⁴ by way of the symbolically meant statement of five luminescences arising in their irrealizing quality

Out of a luminous lantern that is the radiating dimensionality (of Being’s) spatiality;

There is the profound instruction by way of the symbolically meant statement of the darkness becoming completely translucent by the brilliant sun arising in (what is) some pitch-black darkness, which is to say that

The totality of the phenomenal world with its probabilistic interpretation is filled with a brilliant luminescence.

There is the profound instruction by way of the symbolically meant statement of there being two mansions: the one being the divine mansion of the luminescence of (Being’s) [nirvanic] lighting-up, the other being the samsaric mansion of darkness, which is to say that

Once the door of darkness has been shut, the door through which the originary awareness (modes) will shine, opens, whereby

All the sentient beings of (Being’s) lighting-up and probabilistic interpretations in terms of samsara and nirvana will be seen in gazing at them as becoming and being *erlichtet* (alight, *sangs-rgyas*).

After this excursion into the deeper significance of the term *ngo-sprod*, we may now return to the much favored numerical assessment of its application on the part of the experiencer. Most intriguing in this context is its being of the nature of seven varieties.⁴⁵ The preamble to these self-encounters is the differentiation between the “elemental forces” (*byung-ba*) that are basically luminous, and their “corruptions” (*snyigs-ma*) that prevent their luminosities from prevailing in what is the joint cosmogony and anthropogony. This differentiation makes it possible to come face-to-face with the three forestructures of our enworlded being (*sku-gsum*), their five originary awareness modes (*ye-shes lnga*), and their deterioration into the eight perceptual patterns (*tshogs-brgyad*) that we call our mind and/or consciousness, due to the loss of luminosity and the lack of awareness.⁴⁶

Within this complexity of encounters that is meant to make us understand (*rtogs*) ourselves and even further to transcend (*la zla*) ourselves, the exposition of the three forestructures as images of what we feel to constitute our wholeness, has been a recurrent theme. Although the relevant literature is enormous, it has been mostly ignored for obvious reasons: the difficulty of a language that reverberates with the immediacy of experience, and the inherent defiance of any reductionism. Two quotations may suffice. The one states:⁴⁷

From the perspective of (its) ecstatic intensity, a radiance-cum-nothingness, in which its Proto-light and (proto-)turbulence have not yet arisen,

One speaks of the “stuff” (of which) the *chos-sku* is made.

From the perspective of a stirring (that has occurred in this nothingness and resulted in the) emergence of its proto-light (taking on the character of a) corporeal pattern that together with the spirituality (of the nothingness)

Forms a whole, (this is what is the) *longs-sku*.

From the perspective of the (unity of) a corporeal pattern and a spiritual (quality) one speaks of this combination as the *sprul-sku*.

The other has this to say:⁴⁸

From the perspective of (Being's) ecstatic intensity (one speaks of) a *chos-sku*,

From the perspective of (Being's transformation into its) proto-light (one speaks of) a *longs-sku*,

From the perspective of the radiance of the five perceptual patterns, this is seen as a stirring (in the direction of a) multiplicity, and this very stirring is (what is meant by) *sprul-sku*.

Even more intriguing in this context is the encounter with, and assessment of, the five originary awareness modes. In the epistemology-oriented and speculative texts, these have been dealt with in terms of their being the founded (*brten*) on the founding (*rten*), that, is the *sku*. Here, there are two approaches. In the one approach, (which I shall call the "more or less conventional" one), the interchangeability of the awareness modes with the elemental forces, similar to the interchangeability of *rig-pa* and *chos-sku*, is stated to be as follows:⁴⁹

The mirroring/revealing awareness mode [has its *raison d'être* in what is] the water's *raison d'être*,

The identity-with-itself-and-with-everything-else awareness mode [has its *raison d'être* in what is] the earth's *raison d'être*,

The specificity-initiating awareness mode [has its *raison d'être* in what is] the fire's *raison d'être*,

The task-posed-and-accomplished awareness mode [has its *raison d'être* in what is] the wind's *raison d'être*,

The meaning-rich dimensionality awareness mode [has its *raison d'être* in what is] the (sky-like) *spatium's* *raison d'être*.

Translated into the modern, preeminently rationalistic jargon, this quotation attempts to impress on us the deeply felt understanding of the nature of each element. Water is primarily cleansing and, in so doing, reveals what has been normally hidden from sight: Earth provides a solid ground, on which we, being an identity in the sense of an as yet unbroken symmetry, can stand firmly: Fire is the spark evolving into the blaze of our analytically selective rationality: Wind blows away our laboriously built-up

figments: The *spatium* is an opening-up, as well as the openness in which "things can happen."

The other approach reflects Padmasambhava's *yang-ti* understanding and teaching, that goes far beyond his *spyi-ti* understanding and teaching. The presentation of this approach is by (or attributed to) a certain Śrīratnavajra (about whom nothing is known). It runs as follows:⁵⁰

An originary awareness mode (that is Being's) symbolic pregnancy (and) no-birth.

An originary awareness mode (that is Being's) brilliance (emerging) from the vortex of its proto-light (having become an actual) brilliance,

An originary awareness mode (that is Being's) brilliance in its self-originatedness (and) disposition to be luminous,

An originary awareness mode (that is Being's) auto-luminescence (and) auto-dissipation (of darkness)-(as a) spreading of light,

An originary awareness mode (that is Being's) lighting-up by itself and (this lighting-up's) dissolution in its legitimate dwelling.

It would exceed the scope of an essay to go into the details of each and every encounter with and recognition of one's "infrastructure." Suffice it to point out and emphasize that this infrastructure's *Lichthaftigkeit* (alightness), as revealed in its understanding that, however it is prized, is never a speculant's absolute, but a phase in one's growth into one's humanity (so often misunderstood as a regression into some sort of primitivism or an escape from being-in-this-world). Rather, this growing-up is crossing the mountainlike barrier that stands between us as sentient (opinionated) beings (*sems-can*) and us as sensibly *erlichtet* (alight) beings. In the words of Padmasambhava:⁵¹

As long as we are [mere] sentient beings (*sems-can*) we deal with the five sense objects complacently,

Once we have some deeper understanding (*rtogs-ldan*), (we deal with them in such a manner) that as (Being's) auto-manifestation we let them dissolve in our no-(longer-) appropriating them,

Once we have become *erlichtet* (*sangs-rgyas*) we (deal with them) in having become sensitively concerned about everything, which means n-o-t-h-i-n-g.

But this “nothing” is not *a* nothing; rather, in our having become and being *erlichtet* through an ongoing process of encountering and recognizing this dynamic state’s infrastructure, any rigidifying and thingifying trend, positive or negative, has been transcended. This ongoing transcending is a challenge and few will rise to face it. Within our Western world frame I do not know of any better formulation of this pursuit and vision than the one as a postscript to his distich *Kenne dich selbst* (“Know yourself”), written in 1798 by the German poet Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg):

Einem gelang es—er hob den Schleier der Göttin
zu Sais—
Aber was sah er? Er sah—Wunder des Wunders—
sich selbst

(One person succeeded—he lifted the veil of the
goddess at Sais—
But what did he see? He saw—miracle of
miracles—*himself*).

Notes

1. A very lucid interpretation of intelligence as dynamic and creative and of intellect as static and more or less self-limiting, has been given by Bohm and Peat (2000, p. 114).

2. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 379ab.

3. *rGyud thams-cad-kyi spyi-phud nyi-zla bkod-pa nam-mkha' dang mnyam-pa'i rgyud*, 1: 101b.

4. This rather cryptic statement presumes an acquaintance with Padmasambhava’s favorite image of a child “returning home” to its mother and, in this reunion with her, recognizing the intimate bond between them that makes the two one, though not in a numerical sense. In the *Rin-po-che sNang-gsal spu-gri 'bar-bas 'khrul-snang rtsad-nas gcod-pa nam-mkha'i mtha' dang mnyam-pa'i rgyud*, 2: 296b, Padmasambhava tells us:

By recognizing (Being’s) creativity as one’s mother,
there is no aversion (and its)
Mistaken identification as hell has been eradicated.

5. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 374a.

6. *Rin-po-che 'od-'bar-ba'i rgyud*, Taipei ed., vol. 55, p. 404, column 7.

7. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 353a. A similar passage is found on fol. 380a of the same work.

8. The meaning of this German word as explicated by Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) in his *Philosophy*, I:

Existenz is the never objectified source of my thoughts and actions. It is that whereof I speak in trains of thought that involve no cognition. It is what relates to itself, and thus to its transcendence...Standing on the borderline of world and Existenz, possible Existence views all existence as more than existence [...] (1967, p. 56)

The definition corresponds exactly to what the rDzogs-chen thinkers understood by *rgyud*. Its Sanskrit equivalent *tantra*, having the double meaning of being a treatise and an experience of an intrapsychic reality, has nothing to do with what the sex-crazed “Tantrics,” be they Westerners or Easterners, have made of it by way of their being in the clutches of *ma-rig-pa*.

9. “Imaging process” is my rendering of the Tibetan term *sgom*, whose Sanskrit equivalent is *bhāvanā*, usually rendered by “meditation.” What the Tibetan and Sanskrit terms describe is akin to what the late Carl Gustav Jung has called “active imagination.” Specifically, the Sanskrit term is a causative noun, meaning “letting and aiding images to come to the fore.” As a dynamic process, imaging has nothing to do with what is popularly referred to as “meditation,” concerning which its contemporary practitioners are deeply confused due to their inability, or should one say, *ma-rig-pa*, to distinguish between fixation and concentration.

10. *rang-ngo*. The use of this expression foreshadows the experimenter’s coming face-to-face with what he really is in his beingness from a dynamic perspective.

11. These are the immediacy of its felt presence, its growth in intensity, its reaching the limits of its intensity, and its transcending itself.

12. In the above four stanzas the key terms *bral* and *grol* highlight the principle of complementarity, characteristic of rDzogs-chen thinking. Both *bral* and *grol* are “neutral” verb forms (neither transitive nor intransitive according to our verbal categories): *bral* intimates the feeling tone of “apartness,” *grol* intimates the feeling tone of a “parting.”

13. *Rin-po-che 'od-'bar-ba'i rgyud*, Taipei ed., vol. 55, p. 404, column 7.

14. The Tibetan term *zang-thal* is a concept that describes an experience in which one comes to what seems to be an impenetrable wall, that suddenly gives way so that one can go “right through” it.

15. This harsh statement is amply supported by wisdom-crazy cultists and academics (in the West) and their imitators (in the East). The mistranslation of *prajñā* by “wisdom” goes back to the late Edward Conze who is reported to have thrown a fit when the word wisdom was mentioned in its Western context, and to have declared that the West has no wisdom, which he then identified with the ordinances of the politbureau of the former USSR. The perpetuation of this mistranslation by academics seems to be due to their being more concerned with proving the dictum (ascribed to Anatole France) “*Les savants ne sont pas curieux*,” rather than with studying the original texts.

16. *Nor-bu-rin-po-che'i rgyud*, Taipei ed., vol. 55, p. 404, column 4.

17. *Ibid.*, columns 4-5.

18. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 7b.

19. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 350ab.

20. The borderline between the “physical” and the “imaginal” is extremely fluid so that, without taking the context and its linguistic expression into account, under the still prevailing reductionism, the distinct features of these two dimensionalities may simply be ignored or obliterated. Thus the imaginal *tsitta* (a Tibetanized form of the Sanskrit word *citta*) may be equated with the “heart” as the seat of dispassionate thinking, mythopoeically assuming the shape of calm and serene “deities.” The imaginal *dung-khang* may be equated with the “cerebrum” as the seat of passionate thinking, mythopoeically assuming the shape of fierce and furious “deities.” The imaginal *rtsa* may be equated with the “veins,” mythopoeically assuming the character of the imaginal body’s skeleton or, more precisely, its dynamic scaffolding. The *sgo* may be equated with the “eyes,” mythopoeically assuming the character of gates through which, as we might say, the so-called mental-spiritual “goes out” to meet the so-called physical and letting it “come in.” The reference to the two eyes implies the other senses as well. This reference to the eyes reflects the fact that in us, as living beings, sight has taken precedence over the other sensory functions.

21. The term, in this spelling, links the more or less concrete body (*lus*) of the experiencer with its dynamic process character, as experienced in the incipient closure onto itself of Being, and referred to as *rin-chen-sbubs* “preciousness envelope.” In view of the fact that rDzogs-chen thinkers thought of the living individual as being basically spiritual and luminous, it may not be out of place to quote Ernst Cassirer’s (1874-1945) similar idea expressed in his *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*:

Every spiritual being has its centre within itself. And its participation in the divine consists precisely in this centring...Individuality is not simply a *limitation*; rather, it represents a particular *value* that may not be eliminated or extinguished, because it is only through it that the One, that which is “beyond being,” becomes ascertainable to us. (1964, p. 28)

22. The rendering of this admittedly difficult Tibetan phrase is prompted by the consideration that the term ‘od refers to “light” as virtual. It becomes “actual” when it “radiates” (*gsal*) and in its radiance comes in distinct colors. This distinction between “virtual” and “actual” calls to mind Thomas Aquinas’ (1224/25-1274) dictum:

color nihil aliud est, quam lux incorporata
(color is nothing else but light embodied)

quoted in Anita Albus’, *The Art of Arts – Rediscovering Painting* (2001, p. 293). The term *thig-le* denotes a

multifaceted reality in the specific sense of *in-forming* and organizing the system that it is. This “information” is “light,” and just as this light shines in itself and by itself, so also information is not a transfer of information, but the system’s information to itself of its dynamic.

23. The last three stanzas are also quoted by Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa Dri-med 'od-zer (1308-1364) in his *mKha'-gro yang-tig* II, 199-200, forming volume 5 of his *sNying-tig ya-bzhi*. His version collated with the sDe-dge edition makes it possible to present a correct text. It is this “corrected” version that has been given in translation.

The last stanza is particularly difficult to render. The term *snang* has the double meaning of “lighting up” (as translated), and of “making visible.” Similarly, “a shining lamp” may imply a quincunx of lamps. Our language simply cannot cope with the singular and plural as a single “reality.”

24. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 352a.

25. From a linguistic point of view it is important to notice the difference between *'gyur-ba-med* and *mi-'gyur-ba*. According to our categories the first term is a noun, the second is an adjective. The same holds good for *'gag-(pa)-med* and *mi-'gag-pa*.

26. *Ye-shes thig-le zang-thal-gyi rgyud*, Taipei ed., vol. 55, p. 417, column 7.

27. *Die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen*. 1795, 15th letter.

28. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1:12a.

29. *bDe-ba-chen-po byang-chub-kyi sems rmad-du byung-ba'i le'u*, 25: 225b-226a.

30. To the best of my knowledge, the longest and most detailed disquisition is given by Klong-chen-rab-'byams-pa Dri-med-'od-zer in his *Grub-mtha'-mdzod*, sDe-dge ed., vol. *Kha*, fols. 122a-127a.

31. It is interesting to note that the Sanskrit language does not distinguish between *mtshan-nyid* and *mtshan/mtshan-ma*. It has only one word: *lakṣaṇa*.

32. *bDud-rtsi bcud-bsdus sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*: 2: 328.

33. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 37a.

34. *Ibid.*

35. In this capacity it is (a) “voiding” (*stong-pa*), (b) “unceasing” (*mi-'gag*), (c) “indivisible” (*dbye mi-phyed-pa*), (d) “knowing this to be so” (*der shes*), and (e) “intangible” (*thogs-pa med*). These five qualifiers are the “insubstantial and unrealizing *rig-pa*’s” transformations into ordinary awareness modes (*ye-shes*) such that: (a) the “voiding” becomes the awareness mode-*qua*-dimensionality where meanings are stored as well as being in *statu nascendi* (*chos-dbyings ye-shes*), from whose auto-luminescence the voiding is seen and felt as being of a deep-blue color; (b) the “unceasing” becomes the quasi-mirroring awareness mode-*qua*-dimensionality (*me-long lta-bu'i ye-shes*), from whose auto-luminescence (unceasingly mirroring the meaning

dimensionality and revealing its richness) this unceasing mirroring is seen and felt as being of a white color; (c) the “indivisible” (in the sense that the “two” preceding qualifiers cannot be separated from each other) becomes the identify-with-itself-and-with-everything-else (“the plane of consistency” in the words of Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari [1987, p. 70f.], “perfect symmetry” in the mathematicians’ language) awareness mode-*qua*-dimensionality (*mnyam-nyid ye-shes*), from whose auto-luminescence the indivisible is seen and felt as being of a yellow color; (d) the “knowing this to be so” becomes the specificity-initiating selectively mapping awareness mode-*qua*-dimensionality (*so-sor rtog-pa’i ye-shes*), from whose auto-luminescence the intangible is seen and felt as being of a red color; (e) the “intangible” becomes the task-posed and accomplishes awareness mode-*qua*-dimensionality (*bya-ba grub-pa’i ye-shes*), from whose auto-luminescence the intangible is seen and felt as being of a green color. While from the perspective of complementarity *rig-pa* emphasizes the dynamic aspect of Being, *chos-sku* emphasizes its stability that, strictly speaking, defies any verbalization. As the last term in this triune *ngo-sprod* code, “the understanding” (*rtogs-pa*), intimates, what we have to understand is the paradox of nothing being everything.

36. On the difference between intelligence and intellect see note 1. In the Tibetan language this difference is expressed by the terms *mtshan-nyid* and *blo*.

37. The counting by three in different contexts applies to the older form of Tibetan Buddhism with its ontological interest; in its later form, the highest number is five, as is evident from sGam-po-pa’s writings. See his *Collected Works* (*gsung-'bum*), vols. 10, fol. 18b; 23, fol.2a, and 25, fol. 11b.

38. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 35ab.

39. These are the *longs-sku* and the *sprul-sku*. The *longs-sku* refers to us as social beings (being-with-others and enjoying it) and the *sprul-sku* refers to us as being guiding images.

40. *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b.

41. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 356b.

42. The use of the German word *Urwissen* for *ye-shes* does not contradict the rendering of *ye-shes* by “originary awareness.” *Urwissen* emphasizes the ontological (stable/invariant) character of Being, while “originary awareness” emphasizes its dynamic character. It is unfortunate that in our language “aware” has lost its verbal character. If I were allowed to use “aware” as a verb, its gerundival form “awaring” would convey what *ye-shes* means: “a knowing (*shes*) rooted in Being’s primordially (*ye*) and bringing it to its illumining Being.”

43. I have borrowed the expression “symbolic pregnancy” from Ernst Cassirer’s *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1953-1957). The above exegesis is an attempt to render intelligibly the Tibetan phrase *sangs-rgyas ngo-sprod brda'-chos*. The quoted passage is found in Padmasambhava’s *rGyud thams-cad-kyi rgyal-po Nyi-zla'i snying-po 'od-'bar-ba bdud-rtsi rgya-mtsho 'khyil-ba*, 3: 36a.

44. Although the Tibetan term *man-ngag* is said to correspond to the Sanskrit word *upadeśa*, it represents the quintessence of Being’s efficacy (*thabs*).

45. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 28a-37a.

46. The number eight derives from the observation that the four sensory perceptual patterns of (1) seeing, (2) hearing, (3) smelling, and (4) tasting are spread out over our (5) body. This is itself a perceptual pattern (touching) and thus forms the founding stratum of the egological mind that is twofold in (6) perceiving something to be there and (7) perceiving this something emotionally-affectively; and (8) their “founding stratum,” that is our ontic foundation.

47. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 30b-31a.

48. *Ibid.*, 35b.

49. *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 367a.

50. *rGyud thams-cad-kyi rtse-rgyal nam-mkha' 'bar-ba'i rgyud*, 1: 94b-95a.

51. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 32a.

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B. Works in Tibetan

Unless stated otherwise all works are quoted from the Derge (sDe-dge) edition of the *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum* by volume and folio numbers.

