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Is the Mind in Search of Itself?

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The once so comfortable notion of mind being a single and simple entity has been thoroughly discarded by a variety of disciplines that have probed its mystery. More and more it is realized that mind is an emergent phenomenon in the evolution of which many factors play an important role. In Buddhist experience-rooted and process-oriented thinking (rdzogs-chen) mind is a complex dynamic system, described in mythopoeic images that cannot but deeply impress the questioner.

THE WORD “mind” has exerted and still exerts a strange fascination, so much more so that essays, popular and scientific and in-between these two extremes, continue to be written about this subject as if it were a *thing* or entity that could be dissected, mapped, and reduced to something called “objective.” This commonly accepted and practised approach to what is labelled “mind” involves two fallacies. The first one is the fact, suppressed or ignored, that that which we are looking for (and then try to pinpoint among other things) is the unobjectifiable, nonsubjective and nonobjective dynamic reality (for want of a better phrase for an abiding mystery) that does the looking and searching. And as the Indian logicians, foremost among them the Buddhist Nagarjuna, were quick to point out, in the same way as the little finger of one’s hand cannot touch itself, this essentially cognitive reality, called mind, cannot cognize itself. However, the inherent and seemingly unnoticed fallacy of this sort of thinking was that it assumed cognition to be a thing among other things and that its adherents did not realize that experience-qua-experience of which they spoke so much is not a thing and never can be a thing.

The second fallacy, particularly widespread in the Western world, reflects René Descartes’ failure to recognize the mind’s dual character for what it is and his misconception of the mind’s nondual duality

as a duality of materials (that, writing in Latin, he referred to as *res*) which it is not. There was for him, on the one hand, the material *stuff* (matter) or *res extensa*, the extended substance/matter, of which, among other things, our brains are made, and, on the other hand, the immaterial *stuff* (matter) or *res cogitans*, the thinking substance that presumably designates not only the individual mind which thinks but also the material *stuff* of which the brain is constituted. The incongruity of Descartes’ reasoning shows up in the noticeable phenomenon that if we do some damage to the brain we also do some damage to the mind. Under these circumstances why do we need either, a brain or a mind, if we cannot separate the one from the other? The time-honored adage “mind over matter,” the bastard child of Descartes’ woolly thinking, is either wishful thinking or plain nonsense—take your pick. Descartes’ worst mistake, which was to have disastrous consequences, was his confusing a duality of material substance with a duality of interpretation. An interpretation depends on a point of view or perspective, a context. Any physical *thing* can have many *contexts* and, hence, many interpretations, involving and being facilitated by language that is already and always culturally loaded.

In particular, our language, so rich in nouns that stand for things, is geared to a preeminently static

worldview in which structure takes precedence over function, quantity over quality (of which Lord Rutherford once proudly said that “quality is nothing but poor quantification”—a statement that does not hold good anymore even in the so-called “hard sciences”), and thingishness over operationalness or process. Now, the first point to be emphasized is that mind is not a thing, but a *process* that can be interpreted in two ways. In one interpretation it is a complex dimension consisting of electrons, molecules, chemicals and whatever any of the “hard sciences” may come up with, which leads us back to a universe of matter and is decidedly reductionist. In the other interpretation it is a question of what these movements (of supposedly material entities) *mean* to the mind that they are assumed to constitute, which leads to the philosophical problem of emergence.

Though overshadowed by the analytical-reductionist presentation of its tenets, Buddhism is basically concerned with dynamic processes that are self-organizing, self-structuring, and self-complicating. Its very claim of being first and foremost a Way confirms its process character, for the Way is the *going*, not an inert link between two points, each one of them being a dead-end, regardless of whether we call the one dead-end samsara and the other dead-end nirvana.

The problem of emergence is already intimated in the opening statement of one of the oldest Buddhist documents, pertaining to the Pali Abhidhamma literature, the *Dhammasangani*. There we read: “When a healthy conscious attitude, belonging to the world of sensuous relatedness ...has arisen, then...” Following this preamble the “then” is elaborated upon in a list of function-nouns pertaining to the various levels in the “psychic household” in which they perform their respective duties. In this opening phrase that unequivocally emphasizes the positive aspect of Buddhism, the word “when” according to the overall context also implies a “where,” denoting the situatedness of human beings in a world of their own making. We should never forget that *when* and *where* are context-dependent concepts, not absolutes.

More difficult to assess is the original term *citta*, rendered “conscious attitude” in the present context and in view of the fact that an attitude is itself a complexity whose meaning the usual translation of this term by “mind” fails to convey. That it was conceived of as an emergent phenomenon is

vouchsafed by the predicate *uppanna hoti*, where *uppanna* is the past participle of a verb meaning “to emerge, originate, come forth.” The difficulty of rendering this term adequately is compounded by the fact that it occurs in a list of three technical terms: *citta—manas—vijñana*, said by Vasubandhu, the epistemology- and structure-oriented author of the *Abhidharmakosa*, to have one and the same meaning, which they do not have. For the experience- and process-oriented thinkers, what we refer to as “mind” and conceive of as a single entity is an octuple pattern relating to and suffusing a living human being as a whole and, thereby, making him and/or her an experiencer. Whenever we deal with experience we find that we live in an imaginal (not imaginary) world in which these images are meaningful self-manifestations or self-presentations (not representations) of the whole’s dynamics.

Every emergent phenomenon, such as the one called “Mind,” that on closer inspection turns out to be a complexity of operations, displays a double dynamics. On the one hand, as its qualification “emergent” intimates, it points to its source from which it has emerged, and on the other hand, it transcends itself in being more than the features or patterns that went into its making and hence cannot be reduced to any one of them.

What is this emergent complexity’s source? It is, in strictly Buddhist terms, the whole’s (Being’s) nothingness that, far from being an empty container (as which it is so often misunderstood by an uncomprehending literalism), is but the whole’s energy. In the abstract language of modern science, it is a symmetry breaking process, and, in the mythopoeic language of lived-through experience, a lighting-up. Whether we speak of some symmetry-breaking or some lighting-up, it occurs spontaneously—*sponte* (“of its own accord”)—without any extraneous stimulus. Still, the questions of what *is* symmetry said to break and turn into broken symmetries, and of what is that which lights up and, in so doing, turns into luminous phenomena and presences, have not yet been answered.

Let us begin by asking ourselves what symmetry means. Symmetry is both an aesthetic and a mathematical concept. In the domain of aesthetics we prefer symmetry/symmetries, although too many can be boring and lose any aesthetic appeal. In mathematics, there are many different kinds of symmetry: reflections, rotations, and translations—

to mention only the most important ones. Without going into the details of an absorbing subject, suffice it to say that the most familiar symmetric form is our body that is “bilaterally symmetric,” which is to say that its left half is (broadly speaking) the same as its right half. But not only are the two sides not exactly the *same*, they occupy different regions of space with the added complication that the left side is a reversal of the right side—its mirror image. The moment we speak of a mirror image we introduce the mathematical concept of reflection that, by relating the two halves of the body, leaves the human form *invariant*—at least in its appearance, if not in its essence or its respective eigenstate. Invariance must not be confused with rigidity. Rather, as something dynamic—(note our ingrained tendency to thingify whatever we encounter)—it initiates its own bifurcation that marks a qualitative change in the system’s (the whole’s) original state that, from a dynamic perspective, is unstable and, for this very reason, makes emergent phenomena possible. In Buddhist experience-based and process-oriented thinking that goes by the name of rDzogs-chen, this initial dynamics is technically referred to by the term *de-bzhin-nyid*, usually (and uncomprehendingly) rendered by “suchness.” Actually this term is a compound, meaning an unspecified “this” (*de*) that continues (*bzhin*) being this “this” and “making this its being-this possible” (*nyid*). Its lighting-up “results” in a bifurcation that in its incipience is experienced and then described in terms of *in-tensity* and *ex-tensity*. Both *in-tensity* and *ex-tensity* are complementary concepts; their complementarity means that the one cannot be without the other. It does not mean a struggle of opposites as which complementarity is often misunderstood. Since we as embodied beings are males and females we cannot but interpret this bifurcation into *in-tensity* and *ex-tensity* in terms of masculinity and femininity such that *in-tensity* is associated with masculinity and *ex-tensity* with femininity. *In-tensity* as the masculine principle (in the nature of all that is) becomes the joy and exuberance in working out the inspirations and projects that *ex-tensity* as the feminine principle (in the nature of all that is) has to offer. Hence *ex-tensity* becomes synonymous with creativity that as such involves, if not, say, is, an appreciative discerning. Both the joy in working out one’s potential and the appreciation of the potential to be worked out are mutually reinforcing, which is another way of

restating the principle of complementarity. The bifurcation into or complementarity of *in-tensity* and *ex-tensity* reflects an original state’s instability, but what are we to understand by this original and/or initial instability? The answer seems to be provided by the fact that *in-tensity* (the masculine principle) and *ex-tensity* (the feminine principle) are homologous by having a common origin that is the whole’s (Being’s, the universe’s) “intelligence.” Intelligence in this sense has nothing to do with the much vaunted IQ, rather, intelligence is a way of knowing where to go. A more philosophical term for this kind of knowing is intentionality or purpose. Never at rest (stagnant) it always is creative. In other words, it remains *invariant* under all its *transformations* (“creations”), which means that we have to think of two contrary notions as a single dynamic one, as demanded by the late French scientist-phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) and, long before his time, insisted on by the Buddhist rDzogs-chen thinkers.

Because of the important role creativity plays in a living person’s life it should not come as a surprise that the complexity called Mind is feminine in nature. When we who are both the whole and yet only part of it, a “closure” that yet is “open” (as the philosophical jargon puts it), encounter the forces working in and through and upon us, we image them in preeminently human shapes that display distinct qualities and, as we might say, character traits. In a sense they are the feminine principle’s “signatures” in the sense in which the physician Paracelsus (1493-1541) understood the German word *Signatur*, and in which Jakob Böhme used his *signatura rerum* as a means to understand the nature or essence of all that is.¹ Most revealing is the exegesis of the term *phyag-rgya-ma* by Klong-chen rab-’byams-pa Dri-med ‘od-zer who says:²

phyag means “to hold (fast to),” that is, to hold fast to the level where the darkness-gone/light having spread (experience),³ rather than to samsara;

rgya means “to seal,” that is, “to impress on samsara the seal of (self-) refinement and pellucid consummation;”⁴

ma means “similarity to life-sustaining food,” that is, in the same way as a person is going to die when there is no food, so also, if the (deeply felt) understanding (of what one really is), depending on the *phyag-rgya-ma*, is not born (in one’s self), this (lack of understanding) will fetter one in the three realms of worldliness.

Now let us return to the emergent complexity that we so inadequately call Mind and that, on closer inspection, is already a “closure” of a greater dimension onto itself. Imaged in human shapes that reflect sociocultural frameworks, its constituents are eight femininities. These eight femininities, ever-present psychic realities that are simultaneously generative and fostering, divide into two groups, of which one group occupies the four cardinal points of the compass, the other group the four quadrants—a neat example of creativity’s self-geometrization. The basically descriptive names of the four femininities of the first group are:

Gauri (in the East), Cauri (in the South),
Pramoha (in the West), and Vetali (in the North).

The descriptive name Gauri means “the brilliant one” and she is experienced as being of pure white color. The descriptive name Cauri means “the thieving one” and she is experienced as being of yellow color. The descriptive name Pramoha means “the enrapturing one” and she is experienced as being of red color. The name Vetali means and denotes a “female vampire, a reanimated corpse” and she is experienced as being of black color. In passing, it may be pointed out that the colors ascribed to these psychic realities in female forms are highly suggestive: white is the color of purity; yellow is the color of gold that is the target of thieves; red is the color of passion, mostly sexual; and black is the color of death, both physical and spiritual.

As “signatures” in the above mentioned sense, they are the expressions of an individual’s psychic reality beginning with his or her “ontic foundation,” in the original texts variously termed *citta* in Sanskrit and *sems* or *kun-gzhi* (literally meaning “a ground through and through” and by extension “the reason for all-that-is,” in which case it is also called *kun-gyi gzhi-ma*, the feminine particle *ma* emphasizing its female dynamics) in Tibetan. In the Tibetan rDzogs-chen context it is always understood as a closure of wholeness onto itself. The dynamics of this foundation turn into the individual’s egological mind or self (*manas* in Sanskrit and *gid* in Tibetan). As a process, this egological mind evolves into its tainted or polluted state (*klistamanas* in Sanskrit and *nyon-yid* in Tibetan), the taints or pollutants being the three or five libidinal-affective-emotional agents that, as their characterizations as “poisons” emphasize, quite literally poison the whole system and, figuratively

speaking, poison the whole atmosphere or context in which this egological mind operates. By a further process of becoming narrower and narrower and ever more compact or dense, the individual’s body evolves as the site over which his or her sensory functions (*vijnana* in Sanskrit and *rnam-shes* in Tibetan) are spread out. The point to note is that this “Mind-suffused” (if I may say so) body as a totality of perceptual operations is itself already an ongoing process of embodiment, tangibly experienced, and as such is also an orientational point with respect to its spatio-temporal surrounding world—in other words, *an organ of perception* that sets up and fulfills itself in the tangibly perceptible.

The four femininities of the second group are listed as:

Pukkasi (in the South-East), Ghasmari (in the South-West), Smeshani (in the North-East), and Candali (in the North-West).

Their names stem from designations of low-caste individuals, reflecting the hierarchical structure of ancient Indian society (still very much alive when it comes to family matters). The lowliness of these femininities is intimated by their impure colors: Pukkasi is said to be of a reddish yellow color; Ghasmari of a dark green (greenish black) color; Smesani of a dark blue (bluish black) color; and Candali of a yellowish white color.

As “signatures,” these femininities are, according to the order in which they are listed, expressions of the functions of sight as a gleaming and radiating that emanates from one’s eyes (*mig*); of sniffing in the sense of creating and detecting smells with the nose (*sna*) playing a decisive role; of tasting in the sense of creating and detecting flavors, with the tongue (*lce*) playing the decisive role; and of hearing or listening or hearkening as playing an active role in communication, relationship, and cooperation. Its sense organ is the ear (*rna*) that, rather than being a mere receptor, is able to change the sound configuration so that only those phonemes that are important to and more common to the surrounding language and culture in which the individual finds himself or herself, are picked up.

This octuplet of femininities may be conceived of as a multivalued function of a complex variable that, when we attempt to describe and fathom it, is translated (in the mathematical sense of the word) onto a different “plane.” In so doing, we find that

we cannot return to the same value of the complex function or contain or exactly define it. In the language of phenomenology the “perceiving” act fulfills itself in the “perceived,” and in the language of common parlance the “subject” fulfills itself in the “object.”⁵ In this process of “translating” one plane onto another plane, of “mapping” the meaning of one plane (say, the “subject” plane) onto another plane (the “object” plane), a certain distortion à la Alfred North Whitehead’s “misplaced concreteness” enters the picture. This “object” plane continues the character of the “subject” plane by being conceived of as consisting of “signatures.” The distortion occurring in this translation from one plane onto another one and in the mapping of the latter plane is particularly noticeable in the “look” of the eight femininities constituting and presiding over the “object” plane. This octuplet is referred to as the “eight *phra-men*.” (There is no corresponding Sanskrit word for this Tibetan term.) Thus, the “object” plane of the “through and through ground” (also known as *sems* and *citta*) is the totality of the external and the internal, and its *phra-men* is the Lion-faced femininity who is experienced as being yellow in color; the “object” plane of the “egological mind” (*vid, manas*) is the welter of meanings, ideas, and notions, and its *phra-men* is the Tigress-faced femininity who is experienced as red in color; the “object” plane of the egological mind’s tainted or polluted state (*nyon-yid, klistamanas*) is the individual’s ostentatiousness, and its *phra-men* is the Vixen-faced femininity who is experienced as black in color; and the “object” plane of the (underlying) site for the sense organs and itself being a sense organ is (the body as) the tangible (*reg-bya*), and its *phra-men* is the Jackal-faced one who is experienced as deep blue in color.

The “object” plane of the visual function performed by the eyes is (the dimension of) patterns, and its *phra-men* is the Vulture-faced one who is experienced as red; the “object” plane of the olfactory function performed by the nose is (the dimension of) smells, and its *phra-men* is the Heron-faced one who is experienced as yellow; the “object” plane of the gustatory function performed by the tongue is (the dimension of) flavors, and its *phra-men* is the Raven-faced one who is experienced as black; and, lastly, the “object” plane of the language function performed by voice is (the dimension of) phonemes, and its *phra-men* is the Owl-faced one who is experienced as blue.

The animal faces of the eight *phra-men* femininities are highly suggestive in that this translation of one plane onto another one carries with it a certain wildness. The (relative) calmness of the first set of femininities translates into the (distinct) fierceness of the second set of femininities which has been interpreted to the effect that the four faces of terrestrial wild animals act as “signatures” of vanquishing the deadening (negative) forces in the four resonance domains of which an individual-qua-individual is constituted, and that the four faces of aerial animals act as “signatures” of serving the living beings’ existential interests by way of four originary awareness modes.

Ours is an imaginal world which means that we live in a world of images, imaginal realities, that deeply affect us in our enworldedness. The underlying and pervasive dynamics or creativity with its intent *ex-tensity* as the feminine aspect of wholeness, a nondual duality because of the *com*-presence of an ecstatic (*ek-static*) *in-tensity* as the masculine aspect, lends itself to a spatial conception of it that allows us to speak of its self-geometrization: the four cardinal points and the four quadrants of the compass. In the mythopoeic language of lived-through experience this octogonal pattern is described in terms of eight femininities who, on closer inspection, seem to present four primary divinities (Gauri, etc.) and four secondary attendants or executives (Pukkasi, etc.). However, we must be careful not to take the qualifications by primary and secondary too literally and to misconstrue the whole set of eight femininities as “divine” and “human” entities or objects. Rather, they present facets of a primordially that is neither wholly divine nor wholly human. At best they illustrate the principle of complementarity that states that the one pole (aspect) cannot be without the other pole (aspect) and that both eventually fuse in the abiding mystery from which they have emerged by way of a process of bifurcation.

When we now turn to the strictly cognitive elements in the creativity aspect of wholeness of which the eight femininities are their “signatures,” we, for the most part, still labor under the misconception of the separateness and separability of what is said to be a “subject,” on the one hand, and an “object,” on the other hand. In order to bridge this horrendous gap, we then attempt to belittle or obliterate it by saying that where there is a subject there also is an object—a static interpretation of

the dynamic principle of complementarity—and that each live (“subjective”) cognitive act has—a fatal word in our language—its dead (“objective”) counterpart, which contradicts the very nature of experience-*qua*-experience as an indivisible whole. As is well known in educated circles, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) attempted to resolve this subject-object dilemma by introducing the notion of intersubjectivity without, however, really overcoming his solipsism and failing to notice the distinction between “I” and “Self”—concepts that figure prominently in psychology.

Let us describe what happens in my oculocentric situatedness when I am looking. First of all, I find myself in a world of possibilities, presented to me, as it were, to explore them in their thereness, which means that I am already hooked—caught up by and tied to wholeness. In other words, it is these possibilities that try to catch my eye, to hunt and maybe frighten and threaten me who believes that I am the one who does the looking. Thus, the “objects” are “subjects” themselves. My looking at the objects makes the objects look at me and, in this role change, the look of the “subject”-object is fierce and calls up the image of a wild animal, a lion or a vulture, to mention only two from among the eight *phra-men* who so vividly illustrate that in the imaginal world that is ours there are only “subjects.”⁶

Here a few concluding words may be said about the color symbolism that is far from an arbitrary assignment, by singling out the experiencing individual’s “ontic foundation” with its specific function performance. As an abiding “signature,” imaged and experienced as a feminine figure of sheer brilliance, she is called Gauri (the Brilliant One), and her color (complexion) has a pure white quality. Her specific function performance as sight, conceived of as an equally abiding “signature,” is imaged and experienced as a low-caste female, called Pukkasi whose color (complexion) has a reddish yellow quality, intimating, as it were, the immense wealth, suggested by the color yellow—(yellow being the color of gold, the most precious material)—our ontic foundation has in store for us, and the desire for this wealth, suggested by the color red—(red being the color of passion, both physical and mental-spiritual).

This same ontic foundation, when roused and getting into action, is encountered by us as ever-

present participants in the unfolding of wholeness, in its “signature” character specified as *phra-men*, meaning some intrapsychic forces that “pounce” on us, as a “Lion-faced” femininity whose color (complexion) is plain yellow, and in its specific function performance it is encountered as a “Vulture-faced” femininity whose color (complexion) is red. Certainly, this coming face to face with our endowments can be a frightening experience. Their wealth is simply overwhelming and holds us captive by, quite literally, ensnaring us, and its enticement is in its making us ever more desirous of it. The wild animal faces, those of a lion and a vulture, “staring at us,” as it were, reveal this other dimension of our ontic foundation (which it is better to acknowledge than to repress).

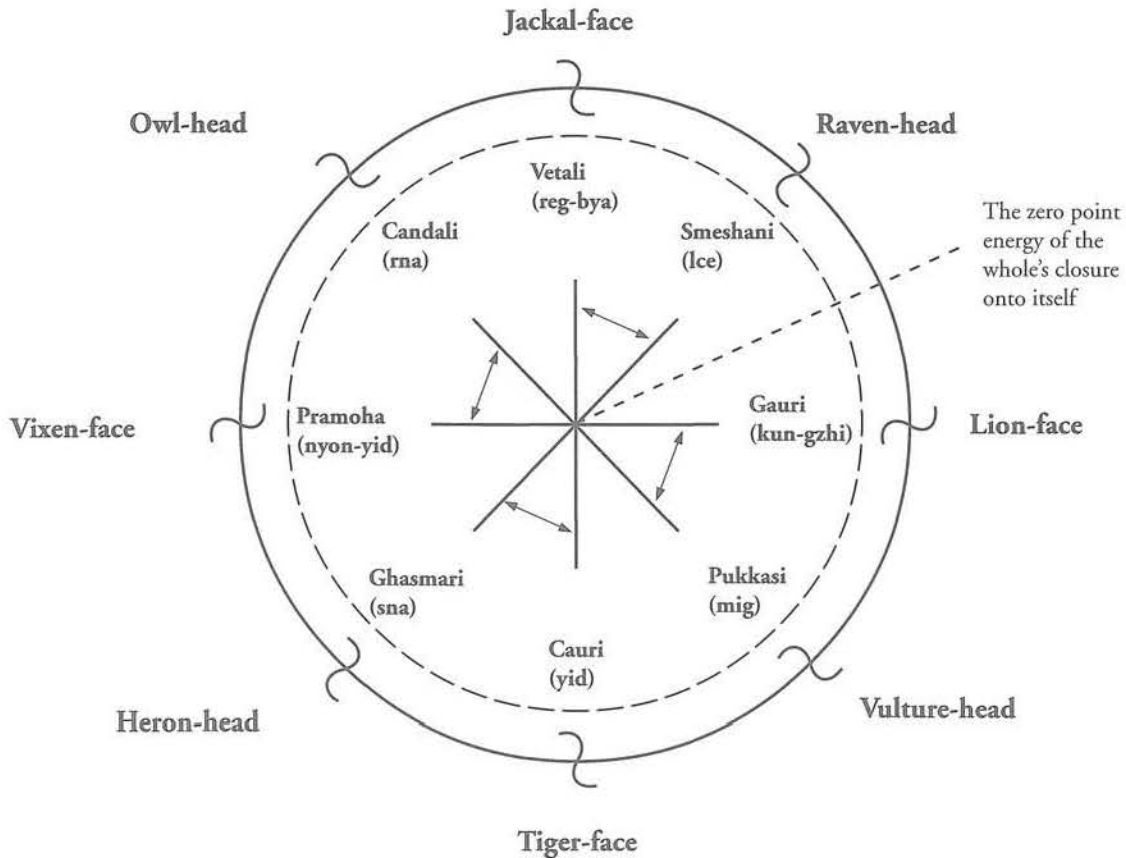
Figure 1, on the facing page, graphically details the intricacies of the complexity called Mind.

It may now be asked, how does our “I-ness” or ego, so often thought of as a kind of “homunculus” sitting in our head and generating in us the sense of being a unitary (and maybe unique) person, fit into or emerge from the complexity “Mind?” The answer is already provided by the reference to the *yid* (Skt. *manas*) and the *nyon-yid* (Skt. *klistamanas*) that in the whole’s closing-in onto itself are what in mathematics are called phase space and phase portrait.⁷ Phase space has as its coordinates all the values of all the variables of any dynamical system (as is the whole, wholeness, or Being) that are about to organize the emergent total range of potential behaviors. Phase portrait presents all possible behaviors (of the system) starting from all its potential and possible initial conditions as a unified “reality.”

Vividly experienced and visualized as female figures, these intrapsychic forces tell us a lot about themselves. As Cauri and Pramoha, to mention only two of these forces and their most conspicuous features, the one “stealing” what is not her property and, in so doing, also changing its color (the brilliant white of the ontic foundation into a shimmering and glimmering yellow), and the other “casting a spell” on what are stolen goods and thereby, too, changing their color into a flaming red, are veritable temptresses whose complicity shows up in the delusive and so seductive notion that “I am running the show,” which I am not. Poetically, this presumed factuality of an ego has been expressed by the

Figure 1

The Intertwining and Interdependence of the Internal and External Imaginal Realities in the Eightfold



Note. The outer circle indicates the whole's closure onto itself; the inner broken circle indicates the outer closure's innermost dynamics; the ~ indicates the intertwining of the inner and outer dimensionalities of this closure, suggestive of the aphorism of the German poet Novalis (Friedrich Leopold, Freiherr von Hardenberg, 1772-1801):

Das Äussre ist ein in einen Geheimniszustand
erhobenes Innre (vielleicht auch umgekehrt)
(The external is the internal elevated into a state
of mystery [maybe it's also the other way round]).

The — indicates the inseparability of structure and function.

German poet laureate Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his monumental work *Faust*, part I, verse 4117 (written in 1808):

Du glaubst zu schieben und du wirst geschoben
(You believe to push, while you are being pushed).

Before him the French classical writer La Rochefoucault had expressed the same idea in his *Maximes* (written in 1782):

L'homme croit souvent se conduire lorsqu'il est conduit
(Man often believes he's driving while he is being driven).

Since Cauri and Pramoha as "abiding 'signatures'" of wholeness-in-its-closure with their "executives" called Ghasmari and Smesani, respectively, have as their *com-presences* the *phramen* femininities called "Tiger-face" (*stag-gdong*)

and “Vixen-face” (*wa-gdong*) whose *com-present* “executives,” in turn, are the femininities called “Heron-face” (*kang-mgo*) and “Raven-face” (*bya-rog-mgo-can*), we may cite concerning this quadruplet the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s words:

Life is a rainbow which also includes black.⁸

In this connection and in passing it may be pointed out that, while the “abiding ‘signatures’” femininities have faces (*gdong*) in the strict sense of the word, their *com-present phra-men* femininities have heads (*mgo*) whose faces are more like grimaces that stare back at all their *com-present* femininities rather than just looking.

The above is what is meant by an ego; while, as its emergence shows, it is a self-limiting process that *seems* to have enough continuity so that, as time passes, it seems to be the same ego. This, of course, is not the case; all the time it changes with everything around it, both “inside” and “outside.”

What about the Self with which the ego in its hubris attempts to identify itself? The Self, too, is not a thing, but a process that is qualitatively different from the ego. While the ego, as its descriptive examination has shown, is such that it easily panics when it is “stared at” by its own make-up and, when it does so, is doomed, the Self distributes itself throughout all the processes that make up the emergent mind and *seems* to have a mind of its own, to be purposive and to *know*, period. Unlike the ego that is becoming progressively narrower and narrower and dimmer and dimmer, the Self as an emergent phenomenon is becoming increasingly *erlichtet* (alight) and, while preserving its luminosity, spreads the light that is us. This purposive character of the Self reminds us of the words of the late Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1965):

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. (p. 326)

By now the reader may have discovered that the title of this essay is intentionally tantalizing. If the Mind or Self (that is us) *already* knows there is no point in searching, and if the mind or self (that, too, is us) as a diminished Self is searching, it is up against quite a host of problems and questions. The enigma of Mind/mind or Self/self is one that each of us has to tackle, be it only for realizing that there are no solutions or answers, but only questions.

Notes

1. Although Jakob Böhme (Anglicized as Jacob Boehme) wrote in German, his followers translated his writings into Latin, hence the Latin phrase.
2. *Theg-pa'i mchog rin-po-che'i mdzod*, (sDe-dge blockprint, vol. 2), fols. 108b-109a.
3. This is the literal rendering of the Tibetan term *sangs-rgyas* by which the so-called “Buddhahood” experience is described. Western rendering of this term fails to note the difference between an experience and an individual person by mistaking an epithet for a proper name.
4. This is the literal rendering of the Tibetan term *byang-chub*, corresponding to the Sanskrit word *bodhi*. The Tibetan term is a dynamic ontological concept. The idea of “sealing” calls to mind Martin Heidegger’s dictum that all beings are marked by Being.
5. On this idea see Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 377, and its interpretation by David Michael Levin (1988), *The Opening of Vision*, p. 467.
6. In this connection special mention should be made of the lucid study by James Elkins (1996), *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*.
7. For details of the meaning of these terms see Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen (1997), *Figments of Reality: The Evolution of the Curious Mind*, pp. 49-50.
8. Quoted in *The Guardian*, 11 August 1987.

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