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Three, Two, Five

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Throughout the history of Buddhist thought numbers have played a significant role as a device to group related ideas into what we nowadays would call sets and to refer to structural features of an essentially static world-view. In course of time with the emergence of a dynamic world-view the character of the use of numbers changed. This emergent vision went by the name of Dzog-chen (in its original Tibetan spelling *rdzogs-chen* that will be used throughout this study, the r and s are silent). Its English rendering by "great perfection" is, to say the least, fashionable nonsense, espoused by and propagated in certain segments of society that somehow felt attracted by and succumbed to the lure and *mystique* of the East. This nonsensical rendering reflects the "translator's" utter incomprehension of the subject matter and his linguistic incompetence. Unlike all excessively rational and hence reductionist approaches to reality, *rdzogs-chen* thinking is rooted in the immediacy of experience and as such thoroughly process-oriented. Of course, our word experience is a problematic term that for purely descriptive reasons may be analyzed into experience-as-lived (experience-*qua*-experience) and experience-as-reported, both aspects intertwining in such a way as to form a unitary process. A consequence of this emphasis on experience is the presence of the experiencer as an integral aspect of what is a process. Likewise, a process is not some thing, the abiding obsession of the reductionist of any persuasion (philosophical, religious, or scientific), but, as the word implies, a movement that has neither a beginning nor an end. While this description gives precedence to (its) temporality, there is another, equally important aspect to it. That is its omnidirectionality or spatiality: having neither a center nor a periphery. Both "having neither a beginning nor end" and "having neither a center nor a periphery" are key notions in *rdzogs-chen* thought. The linguistic incompetence of the one(s) who concocted the above mentioned nonsense rendering of a highly technical term shows up in their mechanical translation of *chen* in *rdzogs-chen* by "great," not realizing that in this context "great" is an elative that means having a superlative and intensive force. Worst of all, the rendering of *rdzogs* by "perfection" is sheer fantasy, provoked by a deplorable lack of any observation and understanding. It is an incontrovertible fact in the history of Tibetan Buddhism that texts had to have a Sanskrit title in order to be acceptable by the emergent India-only oriented orthodoxy. If we look at the texts that for the most part were written before the Sanskrit title ordinance came into effect and had to conform to the politically motivated shift in perspective away from its Eastern and Western neighbor regions, we find that *rdzogs-chen* is mechanically translated (transcribed) as *sandhi-mahā* [*sandhi-maha*]^a. The crucial Sanskrit term *sandhi* (short for *abhisandhi*) occurs in original Sanskrit works as *sandhā/sandhyā* [*sandha/sandhya*] which led the Indian scholar Haraprasadā [Haraprasada] Śāstri [Sastri] to coin the term *sandhyā-bhāṣā* [*sandhya-bhasa*] "Twilight language" that in the late twenties of the previous century immediately appealed to the mystery mongers, while the Indian scholar Vidhushekara Bhattacharya, at about the same time, used the term *sandhā-bhāṣā* [*sandha-bhasa*] "intentional speech" which he characterized as an enigmatic utterance in which a secret meaning is intended. There is nothing of "perfection" in this well documented Sanskrit term and no stretch of the imagination can confer any validity on the fashionable nonsense that is trumpeted as "great perfection."

The above dismal picture on the part of Western academics about whom Anatole France (Anatole-François Thibaut, 1844-1924) is reported to have said: "Les savants ne sont pas curieux" (scholars are not interested), is matched by the Tibetans, now living in a diaspora, who have a holy terror of their own language

and use in their communication with non-Tibetan speaking persons Sanskrit words which they do not understand and/or only in their dubious translations that originated within the framework of an out-of-context reductionist linguistics.

Having removed the worst debris that has been piled upon what is technically known as *rdzogs-chen*, we now can direct our attention to the role of numbers of which "three" is the most frequently used one. In order to better understand the dynamic character of the *rdzogs-chen* discipline that is experience-based and process-oriented, a brief exposé of thinking's triple mode may be given. This triple mode involves a progressively deepening movement referred to as (i) representational thinking (*vorstellendes Denken*), (ii) intuitive thinking (*anschauliches Denken*), and (iii) interpretive (hermeneutical) thinking (*verstehendes Denken*). Where experience is of primary importance, modes ii and iii take precedence over mode i. Since, furthermore, in any experience as a process the experiencer is an integral participant in, if not even the initiator of, the course experience takes, *rdzogs-chen* thinking never lost sight of this fact and even took him in his (psychocosmic) complexity as the starting point of its probing the phenomenon Man/man (*Mensch*), understood as another and more unsophisticated term for Reality.

In a seemingly cryptic statement that understands the number three nondistributively unitive, we are told:[\[1\]](#)

Since *rgyud* and *lung* and *man-ngag* are inseparable (from each other),
(They are) the root of the whole (of what is).

The text goes on to explicate each of the technical terms in this quote to the effect that *rgyud*, usually rendered by the Sanskrit word *tantra* that in Western popular thinking and parlance reflects the user's obsession with sex, means "connectedness" that in the specific context of the text from which the above quotation has been taken, is said to be the message of the whole's organizing principle, imaged as the regent of what has become the whole's closure onto itself.[\[2\]](#) This message, elaborated and expanded by a subtle process of questioning and answering, "connects" the questioner with the multiple "intentions" (about which more will be said later) of the regent who now becomes the experiencer-questioner's (inner/intrapsychic) Teacher-revealer.

The message referred to as *lung* is the experiencer's existential reality as a certainty that in no way is contingent on the vagaries of representational thinking and its linguistic limitations, together at best conjuring up a slanted view and indulgence in opinionated verbiage. From the perspective of the Teacher-revealer who is, experientially speaking, the supraconscious ecstatic (ek-static) intensity of the whole in its closure of being the experiencer, the message is this intensity's intentionality.[\[3\]](#) As Martin Heidegger has shown,[\[4\]](#) "intentionality is neither something objective nor something subjective in the traditional sense." And this is precisely what the Tibetan technical term *dgongs-pa* means. Its function of giving experience a wider range of significance pertains to an *Erlebnis* (lived-through experience) described in terms of one's (mental-spiritual) darkness having dissipated and with its dissipation a superlative light having spread (*sangs-rgyas*) — an *Erlebnis* that under the impact of a deadening and, in all disciplines, prevailing reductionism has been turned into a Buddha-person/thing and, to make matters

worse, into a sort of some ridiculous homunculus (a kind of immaterial creature sitting in our head and in charge of knowing) or Koestlerian ghost in the machine.^[5] Closer attention to what lung (as message) with its implicit dgongs-pa (as intentionality) actually means, reveals triple connotations as a bestowing, a grounding, and a beginning.

The most difficult problem and topic in the above quoted rgyud -> lung -> man-ngag unitrinity is the assessment of man-ngag as signifying a "crossing a mountain pass." The solution seems to be provided by the process-oriented rdzogs-chen teaching itself. A process, not being a thing, has neither a beginning nor end. It goes on and on and, on the part of the traveller, may be likened to fell walking. More prosaically speaking, this "crossing a mountain pass" is more of an injunction not to allow ourselves to "get stuck" and be complacent with what we believe to have achieved. In this light even man-ngag as a kind of "calling" gains added significance. Its calling reverberates in the triple-triune pattern of our very being and is itself a triple-triune originative force.^[6]

To this "calling us" that also is a "telling us" to which we as ever-present experiencers cannot but listen (which is quite different from hearing as a mere noise registering), the descriptor ting-nge-'dzin is given. As this technical term, rendered into English by me as "in-depth appreciation" in an attempt to bring into focus the experiencer's participatory presence, intimates, it comes as a tinkling sound (ting-ge) that holds ('dzin) us spellbound, as it were, and to which we hold with fascination. Not only is what is so designated sonorous, it also is luminous which suggests its basically spiritual (thugs) provenience. Being an emergent phenomenon its emergent dynamic manifests itself through three salient phase spaces — "spaces-of-the-possible that conceptually surround instances-of-the-actual," in the words of Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen.^[7] The first phase space is experienced as a "just-so," the second one as a "through and through lighting-up" that by its very lighting-up has something to say (gsung), and the third one as a "causal momentum" in the shape of phonemes-sememes that have a corporeal Gestalt quality (sku) about them. From the perspective of the anthropic aspect of the anthropocosmic whole, the process, described above, can be redescribed by saying that what we call our body-as-experienced (sku) rather than as an object of representational thought, is the expression and the expressed of the spiritual (thugs) in us. Its phonemic-sememic shape, auditively and visually experienced, is the syllable HUM [HŪM].

With this emphasis on the spiritual, however concretely it may be "anthropically" conceived of, we are led to another phase spaces emergence that is more "cosmically" conceived of. The first phase space is referred to by the term chos-sku, experienced as a patterned reality (sku) that is meaning (chos) through and through. Though it may be compared to some kind of symmetry in the mathematical sense of the word as a bland uniformity, it is the source of interesting patterns or phase spaces due to its inherent dynamic that is technically known as "symmetry breaking." The first such symmetry break is the so-called longs-sku (in its full form longs-spyod rdzogs-pa'i sku). Literally rendered, this term means a patterned reality (sku) raised to the level of prominence (longs) and indulged in (spyod) holistically (rdzogs) by its originator, the whole's spirit/spirituality. As its Sanskrit equivalent (sambhogakaya) intimates it is a pattern (kaya) of mutual (sam) enjoyment (bhoga) that is feelingly imaged and sensuously experienced as a man and woman in intimate union. The second and, for all practical purposes, last

symmetry break is referred to as sprul-sku. In its phase space character it is experienced as a phasm, an intensely felt presence of a brilliant light that, in the narrower sense of the word, acts as a "guiding image." If, using the language of mathematics, we conceive of the various patterned realities (sku) in their emergence as phase spaces, then the specific images in and through which they are experienced are their phase portraits.^[8] It would go far beyond the scope of the present presentation to go into the related problem of attractors, specifically when a system — there is nothing that could not be conceived of as a system — settles down to repeating the same process periodically: when a system undergoes a sequence of phase spaces that eventually put it back where it started, now to be read as sprul-sku <—> longs-sku <—> chos-sku, ever ready to repeat the sequence chos-sku <—> longs-sku <—> sprul-sku.

Let us return to the notion of "connectedness" (rgyud) as described above as "the message of the whole's organizing principle, imaged as a regent of what has become the whole's closure onto itself," that is our Existenz (rgyud) as defined by the German psychiatrist-turned-philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) to the effect that

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, [italics added], and thus to its transcendence...^[9]

points to and remains connected with a supra-ordinary reality to which we may refer, in philosophical diction, to as Being, not in the sense of some static thing, but as sheer dynamics. Strange to say (or maybe it is not so strange) this thoroughly dynamic Being has a triune character in which each of its aspects is dynamic. There is, first of all, what is called its "stuff" (ngo-bo), irreducible to any thingishness. It is — (to use this fateful word in our language) — an utter openness/nothingness (stong-pa) that does not allow any permanent structures to persist (which would contradict its very character of openness and nothingness). Then there is what is called its "own (most unique) ability-to-be-itself" (rang-bzhin) a sheer radiance (gsal-ba). And, lastly, there is what is called its "spirit/spirituality" (thugs-rje). Literally rendered this term means that "spirit" (thugs) is "the lord" (rje). It is described as "all-encompassing" and/or "all-pervasive" in the sense that it inseparable from the other two aspects of Being and even upholds them. In its spiritual aspect Being is furthermore described (and experienced) as a supraconscious ecstatic intensity (rig-pa) that in its cognitiveness is more of the nature of a deeply felt concern — wholeness is concerned with wholeness. This supra-ordinary concern of wholeness-qua-wholeness reaches into us who, though being a closure of wholeness onto itself, are wholeness itself or, more precisely, a sub-whole. Unlike a totality wholeness-qua-wholeness or any sub-whole (of it) cannot be dismantled and re-assembled. The consequence is that we as a closure of wholeness-qua-wholeness onto itself and as such a sub-whole are, however paradoxically it may sound, still the whole and by virtue of it "nothing," no thing as maintained by representational thinking, "radiating" (as when our eyes light up with joy), and "concerned," that is, circumspectively caring. However, only too often we are oblivious of our luminous and "spiritual," caring nature and prone to glide off into the dullness of the representational logic-dominated mode of thinking that dismisses everything that does not fit into its narrow frame of reference, as of little or no relevance. This trend is indicated by substituting for the circumspensive mode (thugs-rje) the term of "that which makes representational thinking possible" (mtshan-nyid)

that then unbeknownst to us is mistaken for the spiritual. It is the liveliness of the whole's spirituality, even in its lowered intensity as the representational, that is somehow felt as some kind of "playing" (rol-pa), which term is another expression for thugs-rje and mtshan-nyid.

Whether we think of Being in its triune dynamic as transforming itself into what we call Existenz in its triune dynamic, the fact remains that these two transformations are self-continuing processes climaxing, if this is the correct term, in the miracle that is our humanness. This, too, is a triune process whose continuity is expressed in the use of the term bryud, emphasizing the dynamic character of the term rgyud that may be misunderstood as some static reality.

There is, first of all, the continuity of the "regent's intentionality" (rgyal-ba'i dgongs-pa) where "regent" refers to the whole's spirit/spirituality imaged in human shape, and "intentionality" as imbuing the sub-whole over which he presides with meaning and designing the meaningfulness of the experiencer's life. Since neither spirit nor design are things in the sense in which thingishness is conceived of, the "regent's intentionality" has nothing to do with the much vaunted notion of determinism that, in the Western context, gained an almost irresistible momentum under Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and Pierre-Simon, marquis de Laplace (1749-1827). Rather, the "regent's intentionality" is an ontological concept summing up the calmness and serenity of the whole's transformation into the experiencer's primordial and virtual Dasein (gnas-lugs) and its phase transition into his Dasein's actual intentionality as a meaning-positing (Sinnsetzung). This involves the unitrinity of the chos-sku, the longs-sku, and the sprul-sku, each of these phase spaces and phase portraits reflecting the intensity of the individual's experiential reality that "has something to say" in order to enrich and improve his life. From among these visibly felt psychic realities, it is the sprul-sku that through a symmetry break foretells the differentiation into the sprul-sku as a guiding image proper and the individuals to be guided by it in the sense that they move from their corporeality (sku) via their (inner) voice (gsung) to their spirituality (thugs).

Then there is the second phase-transitional level, halfway between the "imaginal-psychic" realm and the "physical" dimensionality of a concrete individual. It is referred to by the "loaded" phrase of rig-'dzin brda'i bryud that, reductionistically untranslatable, may be paraphrased as "the continuity of Being's mystery as it is propounded through symbols (brda') by him who holds to Being's intensity of meaning as uttered by Being (rig-'dzin)." Here, "symbol" (brda') is used in the sense of that which comes as an epiphany of Being's mystery that is understood in the immediacy of its experience and communicated in the vividness of its utterance, be this a spoken word or a mere gesture. The mechanical rendering of the term rig-'dzin (vidyādhara [vidyadhara] in Sanskrit) by "knowledge-holder" reveals the so-called translator's utter ignorance of what is intended. The original Tibetan texts make it abundantly clear that by the rig-'dzin the person called dGa'-rab-rdo-rje — (not a real proper name, but an epithet) — is meant. dGa'-rab-rdo-rje's life story involves all the salient features of the Jesus figure with his miraculous birth and transfiguration as accepted in certain gnostic circles.[\[10\]](#)

Lastly there is the third phase-transitional level, Being's continuity as transmitted by trustworthy mortal humans. It is referred to by the phrase gang-zag snyan-khung bryud-pa.[\[11\]](#) Foremost among these trustworthy persons was the Tibetan king Khri-srong-lde'u-btsan (742-797 or 804)[\[12\]](#) who is better

known to have initiated the building of the famous Samye (bsam-yas) complex combining styles from the neighbouring countries (Indian styles from Nepal and Kashmir, the Khotanese style from Central Asia, and the Chinese style) with the Tibetan style. However, the prominence given to him is suspicious, so much more so as in the accounts of this transmission that precede this one no specific persons are mentioned. He is best known for his prohibition of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion, his wars against China and the expulsion of a leading Chinese Buddhist, the Hwa-shang Mahāyāna [Mahayana], and his giving one of his five wives, the Lady mKhar-chen-bza' Ye-shes mtsho[tsho]-rgyal, to Padmasambhava as a parting gift "for services rendered."[\[13\]](#) Obviously, foreigners regardless of where they hailed from, be it China or Urygan, had become or were made personae ingratae (in the language of modern paranoid "security"-obsessed politicians, unwanted spies).

After this digression into the continuity of meaning from its supra-ordinary ontological level through its semi-psycho and semi-physical dimensionality into the concrete human dimension, we may now, in another, nonetheless closely related context, deal with the magical number Three, so deeply rooted in our very being.[\[14\]](#)

There are two versions displaying this number. The one version reads

phyi (external) — nang (internal) — gsang (arcane)

and the other one reads

nang (internal) — phyi (external) — bar (between)

The first one is presented as a binding directive having a triple ambrosial flavor.[\[15\]](#) It is so important that it may be given fully translated.

The external (tasted as) the ambrosial flavor of the auto-dissolution of the interpreted phenomenal;

The internal (tasted as) the ambrosial flavor of the three poisons being vanquished; and

The arcane (tasted as the ambrosial flavor of the whole's) birthlessness and symbolic pregnancy.

Here, the (tasting of the) ambrosial flavor of the external (means)

The dissolution of the multiplicity of the phenomenal into its legitimate dwelling.[\[16\]](#)

Where there is neither anything objectively apprehendable nor any apprehending subject, neither negation nor affirmation.

The (tasting of the) ambrosial flavor of the internal (means)

The vanquishing of the three poisons (in their return into their original) Gestalt (quality, i.e., [the whole's] corporeality), voice, and spirit/spirituality.

How does the vanquishing take effect?

[The poison of feeling caught up by spiritual] dullness/darkness is vanquished by the ambrosial flavor of the chos-sku;

The poison of aversion/irritation is vanquished by (the ambrosial flavor of) the longs-sku; (and)

The poison of desire/attachment is vanquished by (the ambrosial flavor of) the sprul-sku.

This is the undoing of the three poisons from and within themselves

By their being vanquished by the ambrosial flavor of (Being's) corporeality, voice, and spirit/spirituality.

The arcane [or] the ultimate ambrosial flavor of (Being's) no-birth and symbolic pregnancy. Is as follows:

(i) (Its) creativity — an ever growing depth and width and

(Its) figments — a (cognitive) intensity in which (any) limitations by the categories (of representational thinking) have dissolved;

(ii) (Its) energy — having no birth and

(Its) branchings — having no end (and being) symbolically pregnant;

(iii) (Its) insubstantiality — abiding in utter stillness and

(Its) energy — of its own accord (ever active), but never moving beyond (itself) and changing (into something other than itself).[\[17\]](#)

The arcane is not a domain for the intellect to become engaged with:

It is no-birth, symbolic pregnancy, (and) the ambrosial flavor (that goes with them).

The attentive reader will have noted that in this meta-dimensionality that touches upon the innermost mystery of life, there is nowhere where the magic number Three is not at work. It works again "close at home" when, according to rdzogs-chen experience- and process-oriented thinking, we as visionary beings fashion our life by beginning with having a vision (lta) that prompts us to cultivate (bsgom) it so as to open a phantastic world of different realities that inspire us to work out (spyod-pa) its possibilities. Though presented in a seemingly linear and sequential order (due to the linear character of our language), what actually takes place is a simultaneous vibrating of these three phase spaces of a continuum that is us. Again it is Padmasambhava who declares laconically by way of introduction of this unitrinity that[\[18\]](#)

It is one's own supraconscious ecstatic cognition [having formed itself into one's] meaning-[saturated] corporeally experienced gestalt that stands dissociated from thematic (propositional-

conceptual-representational) limitations.

After this introductory statement he continues offering a detailed account of the unitrinity that is us as experiencers. This account, divided into a preamble and an intricate disquisition, too, is so important that it deserves to be presented in full.^[19] Its preamble runs as follows:

The internal — the supraconscious ecstatic cognition;

The external — the dimensionality of actual and potential meanings;

The in between (the internal and the external) — the ceaselessly vibrating functionality of the supraconscious ecstatic cognition.

The intricate and lengthy disquisition has this to say:

The phrase "the internal (that is one's) supraconscious ecstatic cognition (turned into one's) meaning-[saturated] corporeally experienced gestalt" means that this supraconscious ecstatic cognition is the non-duality of a radiance (gsal) and a voiding (stong), which is to say that this one's supraconscious ecstatic cognition, brilliant in its genuineness, is not found as anything's "stuff" and, hence, is the voiding aspect of the whole's creativity. Since its not being found (as anything's "stuff") is one's own [and by implication the whole's] supraconscious ecstatic cognition as a [sheer] brilliance, it is the radiance aspect of one's own [and by implication the whole's] supraconscious ecstatic cognition. Since the [whole's] voiding aspect and radiance aspect are not contrary features, this fact is what is meant by radiance and voiding not constituting a duality. Therefore (from the perspective of its felt quality) one also speaks of an ecstasy aspect of non-duality

Since in this non-duality (its) functionality is ceaselessly vibrating, one speaks (of this phenomenon) as the functionality's vibrational aspect. If there were not this vibrational aspect, there would only be what might be called a dull quiescence, which means that no sensitive awareness concerning each and every that is, could ever arise. This vibrating functionality of one's supraconscious ecstatic cognition retains its radiance aspect when, operating from the five senses it becomes the cognition of any object presence. This is not what happens in an ordinary person, because his cognition (of anything objective") is ego-logically distorted. [By contrast], in a person who understands (what this is all about) the vibrational aspect (of his supraconscious ecstatic cognition) may vibrate in the direction of an objective presence, but its ego-logically distorted grasping has dissolved in what is its legitimate dwelling, which means that the sedimentations of past ego-logical experiences as possibilities and potentialities for future ego-logical experiences are unable to vitiate the supraconscious ecstatic cognition situation,

The emergence of the functionality of the radiance-voiding non-duality of (one's) supraconscious ecstatic cognition in patterns of aesthetic appeal makes its presence felt as a luminosity that

shimmers and glimmers in five hues.

The phrase "the ceaselessly vibrating functionality of the in between (the internal and the external)" refers to the radiance aspect of the radiance-voiding non-duality. That is to say that it is a vibrating in the direction of an external object. Furthermore, with respect to this radiance aspect of (the supraconscious ecstatic cognition's) vibrational (functionality) that never ceases (to be operative) there is nothing ego-logical about it, because (any) ego-logical cognition (pertaining to the closure that is) one's Existenz has dissolved (in the whole's non-egological dimensionality).

Furthermore, while the vibrations may fade away by themselves, the functionality of the in between the (internal and the external) does not cease (to be operative) and this is said to be the ("system" Man's) dissipative originary awareness mode.

Once when such an experience as the one (that is referred to as) "one's supraconscious ecstatic cognition (turned into one's) meaning-[saturated] corporeally experienced gestalt," divested of (its) thematic limitations in its radiance-voiding no-duality, has arisen by itself and just radiates in itself, the external object does not cease (to be present), rather, one's vibrating supraconscious ecstatic cognition by vibrating from its sensory apparatus may or may not radiate with reference to an objective situation in which the ego-logical cognition has dissolved into what is its legitimate dwelling (from which it has strayed), and may decide the lighting-up or the voiding (of what lights up) to be (the dynamic of) the dimensionality of (actual and possible) meanings.

Such understanding is (what is called) vision; its radiance within one's being is (what is called) the cultivation of the vision; and not becoming inattentive to it by (allowing oneself to become) separated from it, whether one walks, sleeps, sits, or stands, but rather (remaining aware of the fact that) dichotomic thoughts arising in moments of inattentiveness will dissolve in their legitimate dwelling from (which they have

strayed), is (what is called) acting out one's possibilities. Never to be separated from one's reality as (thus) understood is (what is called) the climaxing (of one's growing into one's humanness).

There are quite a number of interrelated, if not to say, inextricably intertwining problems in this passage that cry out for an elucidation. Of these, three stand out conspicuously and may be dealt with individually for elucidatory purposes only. Each of these three problems or, more precisely, facets of wholeness that, whether conceived of as wholeness-qua-wholeness or as its closure onto itself as us, have their own dynamic that is irreducible to anything else but its own. Their designations reflecting their dynamic quality that is more or less lost in their English rendering, are "radiance" (gsal), "voiding" (stong), forming a non-dual duality, and "in between" (bar) and/or "functionality" (rtsal) whose implicit connotation is gracefulness that links it to the playful character (rol-pa) of spirit or the spiritual in us of which we have spoken above.

"Radiance" (gsal) has the double meaning of being "alight" (erlichtet) and "making visible" in letting whatever enters our field of vision shine with the beauty of its innermost nature. There is an element of ecstasy in this experience of what is termed its radiance. In this context David Michael Levin's remarks may be quoted to highlight its cross-cultural, transpersonal and transhistorical significance:[\[20\]](#)

To see the world with joy brings joy into it. But in the world, this joy is mirrored. To see this joy mirrored in the world — mirrored not only by things but much more so through other people — is itself a great joy. Joy is always returned, reflected in the vision of the beautiful, the good, the true. Since it is not a question of some causal relationship, but rather of a correspondence, i.e., a co-emergent co-responding, a reciprocity, the glowing and shining of the things which are visible presents a vision of beauty that quite naturally heightens the visionary experience of joy. The radiance of things reflects, and is simultaneously reflected by, the 'equivalent' radiance of the gaze. As it alights and lights things up, the gaze itself lights up in its delight. The two, the seer and the seen, are thus gathered together in an ecstasy of light.

This radiance (gsal) that lets us be alight, (for which reason we can be said to be luminous beings), and that lets this light that we are shine forth, is also a clearing, a thinning out, an opening, (which meanings the German words *lichten* and *Lichtung* have preserved). The Tibetan words for this aspect are *stong-(pa)* and *stong-(pa)-nyid* that, though corresponding to the Sanskrit adjective *śūnya* [sunya] and Sanskrit noun *śūnyatā* [sunyata], in *rdzogs-chen* thinking never lost their verbal character, for which reason I render these technical terms by "voiding" in the sense of Alfred North Whitehead's "not allowing permanent structures to persist." In the same way as the rendering of *rdzogs-chen* by "great perfection" is just some fashionable nonsense, so also the rendering of *stong/stong-nyid* (*śūnya/śūyatā*) [sunya/suyata] by "emptiness" is hilarious, if not to say, dangerous nonsense, revealing the "translator's" or user's utter ignorance and ego-maniac self-deception. "Emptiness" is a container metaphor, and, as we know, containers have the habit of breaking into bits and pieces, and as the original texts inform us, there are sixteen "emptiness" fragments or, if one prefers in this age of drug addiction, "emptiness" pills, none of which, singly or jointly, can kill the "emptiness"-addict's pain inflicted on him or her by this "emptiness." The danger in this "emptiness"-addiction is its unavowed rage against and destruction of all Being, including us as human beings with the exception of him or her who proclaims this nonsense that may well be politically motivated.

Our language as well as the prevalent binary mode of representational thinking tend to play tricks on us in making us believe that radiance is one sort of thing and voiding is another sort of thing and making us overlook or be oblivious to the fact that these two thingishnesses are homologous in character, i.e., pointing to the same source from which they have emerged. This overlooked or forgotten source that far from being an inert link connecting or holding together the two thingish realities, is called "the in-between" (bar) that in its more frequently used form of *bar-do* (short for *bar-ma-do*) has, unfortunately, been popularized in one form or another, and in this process has lost much of its significance.

The first point to note is that what is called bar-do is an undivided and indivisible, dynamic and self-same continuum that has neither a beginning nor an end.[\[21\]](#) Its dynamic resembles what in mathematics has become known as phase space. This concept that led to today's geometric approach to dynamical systems — systems that change over time — was introduced by (Jules-) Henri Poincaré (1854-1912). Phase space includes not only the actual values of the various "state variables" of any dynamical system, but also all the potential values. It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that it allows for various formalizations of the notion of context, so important in rdzogs-chen thinking. There are four, six, and ten context formalizations, all of which involve large-scale qualitative principles such as continuity (rgyud), connectivity ('brel), symmetry (mnyam) and so on. Furthermore, it is well to remember that in all context formalizations the presence of the experiencer as an integral aspect of the process is understood as well as presupposed. Since the experiencer is himself an emergent phenomenon, ontologically, pre-ontically experienceable facets intertwine with his participatory presence.

Let us begin with an elucidation of the ten context formalizations and, for brevity's sake, retain the multivalent Tibetan technical term bar-do. The relevant passage has the following to say:[\[22\]](#)

In the bar-do that is (one's) own most unique ability-to-be (as) the primordially of (one's) Da-sein,
Look for the originating source ('byung-gzhi) of both statuses of either becoming erlichtet (alight) or becoming (someone) having a mind (i.e., opinions).

In the bar-do that is (one's) own most unique ability-to-be (with its) motility
Look for the source of its splitting (gyes-gzhi) into motility-proper and an (actual) quivering.

In the [bar-do] that is the ["system's"] functionality as rays of light becoming a subtle cognitive {dynamic}
Look for the feminine-(like) source (gzhi-mo) from whom one's supraconscious ecstatic intensity is born.

In the bar-do that is (one's) supraconscious ecstatic intensity in the lighting-up mode of (one's/its) functionality with its "feelers,"[\[23\]](#)
Look for the feminine-(like) source (gzhi-mo) from where the gateways of an upward (becoming erlichtet) movement and a downward "going astray" movement open up.

In the bar-do that is a threefold lighting-up[\[24\]](#)
Look for the feminine-(like) source (gzhi-mo) from which the triple corporeal patterns (as) the Teacher-revealer originate.

In the bar-do that is a pentad of hues
Look for the feminine-(like) source (gzhi-mo) that is the luminescence of reflected patterns.

In the bar-do that is the five luminescences (turning into) five aesthetically appealing patterns
Look for the feminine-(like) source (gzhi-mo) from which the six

resonance domains go astray into mistaken identifications.

In the bar-do that is (one's) critical appreciative acumen based on listening and thematical thinking
Eradicate the errancy mode (that leads any) sentient being deeper and deeper (into samsara).

In the bar-do that is (your) present cognitive capacity (with its) antecedent and subsequent (phases)
Experience the three ways of reversing (your cognitive capacity's) errancy mode.

In the bar-do that is the possibility and probability mode of being born and dying
Stay on in the vortex-(like swirling) of (the whole's) energy in which (all) limitations dissolve.

Three points in this lengthy discussion of what was meant by the term bar-do deserve special attention. The first one is that, apart from its being conceived of as a dynamic continuum that, however self-same and consistent with itself and everything else it may have been experienced, its utter symmetry was broken by an inherent turbulence. Actually, this turbulence (rlung) here associated with the experiencer's own most unique ability-to-be (rang-bzhin) in the narrower sense of his Da-sein (gnas-lugs), pertains to Being-qua-being (gzhi) of which his most unique ability-to-be as his Da-sein is symmetry transformation. The second one is that in this symmetry-breaking the latent creativity gains the upper hand. This creativity underlies and even nurtures all the unique features of our being and becoming human beings, that is, to be responsive, luminous, and intelligent (which, however, may be doubted). No wonder that for this creativity a neologism was coined, gzhi-mo: a "ground" (that as Being's dynamic) grounds us in our Da-sein as our own most unique ability-to-be, and like a "nurse" (mo) nurtures us.^[25] The third one is that with this symmetry-breaking a shift in the direction of our prevalent dualistic mode of thinking occurs.^[26] This essentially fragmentizing mode is technically referred to as errancy ('khrul-pa), a going astray into mistaken identifications, a "seeing" a duality where there is none.

It is this turbulence in the Being-qua-being/Da-sein/bar-do continuum that, in the abstract language of science, may be called its "functionality," but, in the language of experience, is much better described as "gracefulness"^[27] and "playfulness." Thus, Kun-tu-bzang-mo, the feminine principle in Being-qua-being, boldly declares:^[28]

kye-ma! Although in me there is no errancy,
It is out of my rtсал that something like errancy arises.

But there is more to this term rtсал that, on closer inspection, turns out to be a multivalent experiential reality that ultimately — (if ever there is any ultimacy) — is the whole's and, by implication, our own supraconscious ecstatic intensity (rig-pa/rang-rig) to which any gendered descriptor does not really apply. Yet, in one tradition such as the one just quoted, the feminine principle may stand out as teacher-revealer with her audience of five elemental psychic forces of a highly inspiring character in female shapes (mkha'-'gro-ma) whose inspiring character expresses and is expressed by their being originary

awareness modes (ye-shes) that are dynamic through and through. In another tradition the teacher-revealer is the whole's no-birth/symbolic pregnancy (skye-med ka-dag) and his/its audience is the preciousness of the whole's radiance and brilliance (gsal or Lichthaftigkeit) and purity and transparency (dag or Symbolhaftigkeit). In view of the above it seems appropriate to say a few words about the relationship between what has been called bar-do and what has been referred to as rtsal.

We have already noted and it is worth remembering that the bar-do (the "in-between" if literally rendered) is a continuum that has neither a beginning nor end, but is always a milieu in the double sense of a middle and a haecceity as a plane of consistency. In the language of mathematics this plane is called phase space (whose coordinates are the values of all the variables of the initial situation). Then there is the phase portrait (presenting all possible expressions of the initial situation). This is of particular interest to us who may be conceived of as presenting a phase portrait that is moving in and about phase space and whose long-term dynamics is governed by what is called an attractor. One such attractor is what is called mkha'-'gro-ma, "felt" and "seen" as constituting a quincunx. The term mkhaa'-'gro-ma has suffered badly from the hands of so-called translators. The Tibetan term as such is an interpretive rendering of the Sanskrit word dākinī [dakini], the feminine form of dāka [daka], being a local form of jñāna, meaning "intuitive" and/or "originary awareness" (ye-shes in Tibetan). Its scope is as vast and as deep as the ocean. There still exists a Sanskrit work bearing the title Dākārṇavatantra [Dakarnavatantra] "Ocean of Intuitive Awareness Treatise." Although the image of an ocean or huge lake (rgya-mtsho) is not wanting in Tibetan imagination, preference has been given to the image of the sky (mkha') whose vastness is more akin to this female figure's ethereal inspiring (spiritual) quality. Its spaciousness is not space as commonly understood, nor is it in space. Rather it is a spatium that is itself intensive and produces and distributes intensities in it. Thus the exact meaning of the symbol term mkha'-'gro-ma is "She who walks over a spatium."[\[29\]](#)

We may now attempt to disentangle the various strands that as emergent phenomena mark and reflect back on the whole's creativity or, as we might boldly rephrase this uniqueness, meaning-in-action (chos-nyid) that, on the level of wholeness or, if one prefers, the cosmic (that is no thing whatsoever and, when its makes its presence felt, is still not something that can be proved), is referred to by the following phrase[\[30\]](#)

Meaning-in-action, (ever) widening (and deepening) in its depth and width.

while on the level of the whole's transformation into its Da-sein or, if one prefers, the anthropic, the following phrase is used:[\[31\]](#)

An (ever) widening and (deepening) depth and width, meaning-in-action (as its/our) Da-sein,

and almost immediately followed by the statement coming directly from the anthropocosmic whole's mouth, that this meaning-in-action has emerged as "my rtsal." Here, the very word "my" carries with it a contextual element, because the whole, imaged as a teacher-revealer, makes no sense or carries any meaning unless there also is a disciple to whom this meaning is going to dawn. As we have seen (and should have noted) the very initial situation is an example of

contextuality. The most attractive feature of contextuality is its unfolding dynamic, summed up in the single term *rtsal* that no amount of reductionist rhetoric is ever able to comprehend. Is this *rtsal* (provisionally and with an eye on the abstract language rendered as "functionality") then something nebulous? Not at all. It discloses its meaning in the context in which it is used with other emergent phenomena, foremost among them the "miracle of light" (*'od-gsal*), itself, as the term makes clear, an "emergent phenomenon," [32] and the whole-*qua-Man*' supraconscious ecstatic intensity" (*rig-pa*), all of which must be "experienced" in the sense of the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's dictum: [33]

Wenn ihr's nicht fühlt, ihr werdet's nicht erjagen
(If you don't sense it, you won't get it).

Other contextually used terms are "rays of light" (*zer*), "feelers" (*yan-lag*), alone or in combinations that imply a mutual identity. The most impressive passage may be given here by dividing it into a preamble and a body text. The preamble has this to say: [34]

Although that which really matters is beyond demonstrability and words
It can be brought home to one's intellect (*blo*) by the supraconscious intensity of [the anthropocosmic whole's] dynamic (*rtsal-gyi rig-pa*):
In the same manner as it is difficult to find
Goods lost in utter darkness by groping for them with one's hands,
While one will surely find them
With the help of a brilliantly shining lamp,
So also is it difficult to find
The jewel (*nor-bu*) of (the whole's) creativity lost
In the utter darkness of one's unexcitedness (*ma-rig*)
By talking about it in words of common parlance,
While one will find it
By the grace of the infallible Lama's (*bla-ma*) [allowing] his face [to be seen by the seeker] and
The precious (*rin-chen*) symbol-(rich) communication [by him who holds fast to the whole's supraconscious intensity and is upheld by it (*rig-'dzin*)].

It goes without saying so that much of the intrinsic charm of the original is lost in its translation. There is the contrast between the "higher order" supraconscious ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*) with its supernatural luminosity and the "lower order" unexcitedness and unexcitability (*ma-rig-pa*) of one's intellect in which the light is so dim that, for all practical purposes, it can be said to have gone out. Then there is the contrast between a jewel without compare (*nor-bu*) and an ordinary precious gem (*rin-chen*). But the most intriguing feature is the manner in which the transition from the "cosmic" to the "anthropic" is presented. On the cosmic level (discussed in the original work in a chapter preceding this preamble) the teacher-revealer is the whole's no-birth/symbolic pregnancy (*skye-med ka-dag*) and his/its listener is the radiance-purity/(symbolicalness)-preciousness (*gsal-dag-rin chen*); on the anthropic level (preceding the concretely human dimension) the teacher/revealer- listener (as the one who listens himself and makes others listen) relationship is made up of (i) the Lama (*bla-ma*) who is conceived of and imaged in human shape and who, implicitly, is

the experiencer's "darkness-gone, light-having-spread" (sangs-rgyas) experience, popularly, that is, concretistically, misrepresented as the "Buddha" (as if he or it were some thing) whose intent/expressive meaning (dgongs-pa) is self-evident and needs no words, and (ii) the listener as a rig-'dzin, that is, "one who holds fast to the whole's supraconscious intensity and is held up by it" who mediates the supraordinary "higher order" whole's and its closure's intent/expressive meaning to the ordinary "lower order" level that is us who, depending on the intensity degree of our intellectual acumen, may or may not understand what is meant.

The body text, taking rather a dim view of our concreteness, elaborates on the variations of the whole's dynamic (rtsal) that is never totally absent, as follows:[\[35\]](#)

Although in the whole's concreteness there exists neither (the whole's) dynamic nor its rays of light (as such),
I shall explain how they emerge in order to dispel my audience's (mistaken) notions.
It is from the swirling center of the vortex-(like) spatium (infinitely rich in) translucent (potentialities)
That the (multiple) dynamics of the emergent phenomenon of light ceaselessly emerge.
Being's turbulence emerges as my dynamic (rtsal);
The emergent phenomenon of light is the dynamic of my playfulness (rol-pa);
Cognitive capacity and (its) intensification, ceaselessly going on, is the dynamic of my playfulness;
Being's "stuff" and (its) own most unique ability-to-be are my dynamic;
The three facets of egocentric thinking,[\[36\]](#) spanning the three aspects of time, are my dynamic;
Unexcitedness and originary awareness modes are (my) dynamic in my feelers (yan-lag);[\[37\]](#)
The gate through which one ascends to higher levels and the gate through which one goes into mistaken identifications are my dynamic;
(One's) ontic foundation, (one's) higher cognition, and (one's) egocentric mentation are my dynamic;
The three modes of going astray into mistaken identifications[\[38\]](#) are my dynamic;
The maturation of this going astray, the five constitutive groupings (of one's concrete existence) is my dynamic;
Disowning, appropriating, and hankering (after them) is my dynamic;
The external and the internal, the world as a container and the living beings as the elixir in it, are my dynamic;
Both the objective and the subjective are my dynamic;
Negation and affirmation, and (any) belief in duality are the dynamic of my playfulness;
Dismissal and acceptance as well as separation and elimination are the dynamic of my feelers;
Good and evil and calculating (their benefits and detriments) are the dynamic of my feelers;
Samsara and nirvana are the dynamic of my feelers;

Happiness and sorrow are my dynamic;
 Enemies and friends and taking sides are my dynamic;
 The cardinal points of the compass and their interstices as well as
 their colors are the dynamic of my feelers;
 The nine levels of postulational thinking are the dynamic of my
 feelers;
 The six classes of those forms of life that move about (and make up
 the dimensionality of samsara) emerge as (examples of) my
 playfulness;
 The two claims (that go by the names of) eternalism and nihilism
 emerge as (instances of) my playfulness;
 The two forms of opinionated thought trends[39] (reflect) the
 dynamic of my playfulness;
 The vision and cultivation of the vision in these two opinionated
 thought trends (reflect) the dynamic of my playfulness;
 Being self-willed and being a meddler (reflect) the dynamic of my
 feelers;
 The measure of the quivering and the measure of the excitability
 (reflect) the dynamic of my feelers;
 The whole range of eternalistic claims (reflect) the dynamic of my
 playfulness; (and)
 All the verbiage about nihilistic claims emerges as my dynamic.

There is nothing rigid about any of these "emergent phenomena," whether they come in threes or twos. They emerge from a swirling vortex (klong) of what is as much a sky-like spatium (mkha'), a complexity of translucent meanings, as it is an ocean (rgya-mtsho), a complexity of radiant meanings. As such, emergent phenomena are not so much consequences of simple causes, as they are incentives to look deeper. This led the rdzogs-chen thinkers to look for the very dynamic of (or in?) dynamical systems such as a human being in particular, and to recognize the emergent and ambivalent character of this dynamic, called rtsal, that, on closer inspection, turns out to be a force, responding in a very specific manner to its environment and its own internal state. (Remember its "feelers" which it extends to probe its environment and its "playfulness" which marks its aliveness).

In a seemingly straightforward manner we are told:[40]

To the emergence of one's (that is, the whole's) supraconscious ecstatic intensity as (its) dynamic's lighting-up the name "mind/mentation" (sems) is given,

And:[41]

kya-ma! Although in me there is no going astray (into mistaken identifications),
 It is from my dynamic that something like a going astray (into mistaken identification) comes about.
 In the same way as in the clear sky
 There are neither clouds nor wafts of mist,
 Though they may occasionally come about,
 So also in Being-qua-being there is no unexcitedness (ma-rig),
 Though it may occasionally come about
 When (Being-qua-being's pervasive) spirit/spirituality lights up as

(Being-qua-being's) dynamic.

Both these utterance are spoken by Kun-tu-bzang-mo, the feminine principle in what is, strictly speaking, already a closure of the whole onto itself as one's Da-sein, near-identical with the whole in being simultaneously supraconsciously intense (rig) and voiding whatever might curtail this intensity (stong). In a sense She is complementary to Him, the no-birth/symbolic pregnancy (skye-med/ka-dag), and, like Him who as a teacher-revealer has his entourage of (male) disciples, She, too, as a teacher-revealer has her entourage of (female) disciples who are the mkha'-'gro-ma, spiritual forces on the way to becoming elemental forces (in certain respects resembling the sylphids in the system of Paracelsus), five in number.

However, we should not overly stress the gendered terminology. Much of what is recorded reflects the omnipresence of the experiencer who is either male or female and brings his or her genderedness along. Thus, while in the first of the above two quoted passages "dynamic's lighting-up" is discussed by Kun-tu-bzang-mo, it is discussed and elaborated by Kun-tu-bzang-po as follows:[\[42\]](#)

For (someone) who does not understand that there is no name for
(Being's) core intensity and that there is no change in it,
(Its) supraconscious ecstatic intensity, lighting up as its dynamic,
becomes the imperfection of those who have a mind (indulge in
mentation, sems-can).
Although (Being's core intensity) transcends the limits set by
thematic thinking and words of common parlance,
Sometimes one has to speak of it, So, oh rDo-rje-sems-dpa', take
heed,
The singular root of the imperfection (that marks any one) who has
a mind (indulges in mentation) is
The belief [the firmly appropriating holding to] in an ego/Self from
which the five poisons arise.
The very word sems-can is coined by this appropriating tendency,
(and what it stands for)
Is the site on which each and every emotional-affective pollution
originates.
From time without beginning to the present it is through this belief
in (and holding firmly to) an ego/Self
That one suffers in the quagmire of frustrations.

Two points of interest may be noted. The one is the difference in conception of what traditionally and not incorrectly has been rendered as "a sentient being." The Sanskrit word for it, sattva, emphasizes its "existential" (sat) character, the Tibetan word, sems-can, emphasizes this being's "cognitive" (sems) character, even if its cognition is of a rather poor quality. Actually, the first component in this compound, is itself ambiguous in the sense that it may, linguistically speaking, be a short form of sems-nyid "that which makes (nyid) mind/mentation/cognition (a) mind/mentation/cognition (sems)"[\[43\]](#) that then serves as our ontic foundation and background cognitiveness. The other point to note is that the term rtsal-snang "the lighting-up (of the whole as its) dynamic" is synonymous with 'khrul-snang "the lighting-up (of the whole as its) going astray (into mistaken identifications)."[\[44\]](#)

It is this lighting-up that has fascinated the process- and experience-

oriented rdzogs-chen thinkers who, quite literally, "saw" this lighting-up as an emergent process that they described in terms of phase spaces having an "as if" quality. With their fondness for numbers as a device of grouping related topics, they spoke of four or six or eight emergence modes ('char-lugs/shar-lugs).[45] In the present context the eight-phase process is of particular interest as it shows that even the spiritual in Man is an emergent phenomenon that we, in our closure that yet remains an openness, envision and sense as our suprasensual concern. The complete account of emergence states:[46]

In the emergence of (what looks) like the (whole's) suprasensual concern (thugs-rje), samsara and nirvana have as yet not broken apart (into separate "entities"),

In the emergence of (what looks) like the (whole's) luminescence ('od), all of what lights up as the phenomenal radiates from deep within,

In the emergence of (what looks) like (the whole's) corporeally seen and felt pattern (sku), (its inseparable and internal) cognitive capacity has not yet lost itself in (something) external,

In the emergence of (what looks) like (the whole's) originary awareness mode (ye-shes), all of what lights up as the phenomenal dissolves in its insubstantiality,[47]

In the emergence of (what looks) like (the whole's) non-duality (gnyis-med), its (one's) cognitive capacity abides in (its) singular focus (on itself),

In the emergence of (what looks) like (the whole's) dissolution of (any and all) limitations (mtha'-grol), it does not abide in any limit (situation),

In the emergence of (what looks) like the gateway into samsara, the "impure" (ma-dag), one sees the ceaselessly spouting fountain of one's interpretations of (one's phenomenal) world;

In the emergence of (what looks) like the gateway into (the whole's) originary awareness modes, the "pure" (dag-pa), (the whole's) creativity (is experienced) as a child's reunion with its mother.[48]

While in the contrasting and complementary phases of the "pure" (the translucent and imaginably appealing) and the "impure" (the opaque and imaginably unappealing), in which either phase is latently present in the other, the pursuit of the "pure" is of paramount importance as it brings us closer to our wholeness, the recognition of what the "impure" involves is no less important. Indirectly it is already intimated by the "as if" or "what looks like" (ltar). This experience of the "as if" makes us uncritically believe in whatever lights up, "appears," as being some thing, which, of course, it is not. It is for this reason and other reasons as well, that the rdzogs-chen idea of the "as if" cannot be compared with the German philosopher Hans Vaihinger's (1852-1933) *Als Ob*,[49] which, in part, is somewhat confused but, basically, reductionist.

Reductionism, whether in its naïve or hierarchical form, works in either a bottom-up or a top-down approach to what is presumed to be reality, in its vain effort to find a "Theory of Everything" that so far, in spite of all the rhetoric with which it is propounded, has not offered any insights but only an impenetrable mess and has not explained or made us understand anything.^[50]

The main reason for the rdzogs-chen thinkers' dim view of the interpretations (srid) we put on that which "lights up" (snang) as our phenomenal world in the broadest sense of the word, and their more or less sweeping rejection of what are probabilities rather than certainties, are based upon the insight that as mere assumptions they have, at their best, only a limited validity and, consequently, are as quickly discarded as they are generated. In brief, the "impure" is utterly impersonal; it might just as well be irrelevant and the theories about it be mere crap.

Off and on references have been made to dualities — the number Two in the title of this essay. We tend to contrast them: the one against the other, and putting it this way reflects our prevailing static world-view. In process-oriented thinking there are no contraries, only complementarities in which the presumably irreconcilable opposites include each other and impart meaning to one another, as illustrated by the moving image of a mother and her child. Probing the dualities by not falling prey to some one-sidedness, however much it may appeal to one's ego and bolster one's self-importance, we find them to emerge (being created by?) from the source that we now tend to call chaos^[51] and phase space and that the rdzogs-chen thinkers called the "in-between" (bar-do) and the "dynamic" (rtsal), resulting, if this is the right word, in the "pure" and the "impure."

In conclusion a few words may be said about the frequently occurring number Five. From a dynamic perspective this number points to Being's (the whole's) self-geometrization: a center that sets up its four cardinal points along which it orients itself in a world of its own making. Projected on a plane this process is statically visualized as a kind of blueprint of a particular "moment" of one's existence that may be imaginably experienced as a spacious palace, a towering citadel, or a sanctum. Its technical designation is dkyil-'khor that, precisely because of its inherent dynamic, differs from what is commonly referred to and known by its Sanskrit name mandala.^[52]

Another feature of this number Five is that it points to what is known as a fivefold symmetry that may be visualized as having an almost circular outline with no planes of weakness because none of the sutures lie opposite each other. This image of a circle that eventually was replaced by that of a sphere, has a long history, admirably summed by Marie-Louise von Franz (1915-1998).^[53] The strangest thing about the number Five is that it sums up the complexity of the initial situation from which we set out on our journey through life and to which we return, more experienced, more erlichtet (alight).

^aNote that certain diacritics do not appear correctly when using Netscape. These can be seen with Microsoft Explorer, but are shown without marks in square parentheses.

^[1] dPal Khrag-'thung gal-po-che, 19: 5a; Thugs-kyi yang-snying, 23: 118b, with

minor variations.

[2] In the Thugs-kyi yang-snying, loc.cit., the word for "regent" (rgyal-ba) is missing. In all probability, the version of this text by only using the word for "connectedness" ('brel-pa) is more correct and to the point.

[3] The most exhaustive discussion of lung is presented by Padmasambhava in his sPros-bral don-gsal, 1: 68a-68b. According to him, the substance of this reality's message is this reality's invariant spirituality, its supraconscious ecstatic intensity and its linguistic expression is what comes directly from the mouth of the Teacher-revealer and is such that nothing can be added to or subtracted from it.

[4] Basic Problems of Phenomenology, p 314.

[5] The absurdity of the notion of a homunculus has been pertinently exposed by Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen, Figments of Reality, pp. 204 and 250, and by Antonio Damasio, The Feeling of What Happens, pp. 189-192.

[6] Its triple-triune character is well stated in Padmasambhava's sPros-bral don-gsal, 1: 69a:

man-ngag (means) the triunity of the basic Dasein (character) of the totality of what is, the expressing it in words, and the joining of the words (about it) and the meaning (intrinsic to it).

[7] Figments of Reality, p. 110.

[8] On the mathematical notions of phase space and phase portrait and on what they do in bringing Man/man's greatest asset, its image-creating and image-appreciating ability, into full bloom, see Ian Stewart, Nature's Numbers, p. 116.

[9] Philosophy, I. p. 56.

[10] A detailed documentation is in preparation.

[11] As has been so often the case, mystification has been at work with texts of an experiential character, and the term snyan-khung "trustworthy" has been made to mean "ear-whispered."

[12] According to Klong-chen-rab-'byams-pa Dri-med-'od-zer's Zab-mo yang-tig, II, p. 154. For the architectural syncretism see R.A.Stein, Tibetan Civilization, pp. 283-284.

[13] For greater details see Herbert Guenther, The Teachings of Padmasambhava, p. 2 n.2. It makes one wonder why, in spite of the high esteem in which Padmasambhava, the Guru Rinpoche, is held, he is never quoted. Even Klong-chen-rab-'byams-pa Dri med-'od-zer only quotes from the Thig-le kun-gsal, in all probability a condensed version of Padmasambhava's sPros-bral don-gsal, but not from Padmasambhava's major work or any other works by him. In the long run, Khri-srong-lde'u-btsan's "India-only" policy laid the groundwork for the dogmatism and sectarianism of the so-called orthodox Tibetan Buddhism as held and enforced by the once politically powerful Gelugpas (dge-lugs-pa).

[14] A concise presentation of why "all of us prefer the trinity: trilogy, triptych..." has been offered by the Russian mathematician V.V. Nalimov (1910-1997) in his *Realms of the Unconscious The Enchanted Frontier*, pp.165-168.

[15] Nyi-zla'i snying-po 'od-'bar-ba bdud-rtsi rgya-mtshor 'khyil-ba, 3: 22ab.

[16] rang-sa. This image, frequently used by Padasambhava, intimates a return to the place or source or dimensionality from which one has strayed into mistaken identifications. In the technical language of rdzogs-chen thought this "legitimate dwelling" is called chos-(kyi) dbyings "the dimensionality where meanings are stored and/or in their status nascendi." Padmasambhava's use of the term rang-sa is akin to the Gnostic idea of anachoresis, a return to one's own origins. For this Gnostic idea see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 58.

[17] For a Western reader each technical term in this triune process character of the arcane poses a problem in itself. There is (i) the non-dual duality of the whole's "creativity" (chos-nyid, literally rendered 'that which makes meanings meanings') and its "fictions" (chos-can, literally rendered 'that which carries with it the whole's unlimited creativity in a limited form'). Both chos-nyid and chos-can (with chos in the sense of an external meaning in misplaced concreteness or thingishness) play a prominent role in logic, the organizing principle in representational thinking. Then there is (ii) the non-dual duality of the whole's "energy" (snying-po) that, not being a thing, has nothing about it that would allow us to speak of it as being something (some thing) subject to being born (skye-med), and its "branchings" (yan-lag), spreading out from their source, as it were, and ceaselessly prefiguring the pentamorous patterning of our pre-concretized being, carry with them the whole's symbolic pregnancy (ka-dag). While the skye-med may be said to be the what of the experience, the ka-dag describes how the experience of the what is being "felt." Experientially speaking, both skye-med and ka-dag are inseparable from one another. Lastly, there is what we would call paradox of (iii) rest (rnal-mar gnas-pa) as implied by the whole's insubstantiality (dngos-med) and spontaneous (lhun-grub) self-contained movement ('pho-'gyur-med) or energy (snying-po), which means that a living system, be this a human being or the anthropocosmic whole, is never in an equilibrium state.

[18] sPros-bral don-gsal, 1: 44a. In this sentence the two decisive terms rang-gi rig-pa (rang-rig in its shorter form) and chos-kyi sku (chos-sku in its shorter form) defy any reductionist rendering. The term rang-(gi) rig-pa refers to and describes our "cognitive" nature before it is channeled through and identifies with the categories of rational-representational thought, and, in addition, emphasizes its "own" (not dependent on something other) reality that must be experienced in order to be known. Similarly, the term chos-sku is an experiential term antedating, as it were, its concretization into a corporeal pattern. Though inconceivable in the strict sense of the word, it may be "conceived of" as the Vorstruktur (forestructure of) unseres (our) Menschseins (being human).

[19] Ibid., fols. 44a-b. In the original text the technical terms are sometimes used in their full form, sometimes in their short form. Similarly, there are syntactical variations. In the above rendering I have tried to be consistent.

[\[20\]](#) The Opening of Vision, pp. 394-395.

[\[21\]](#) Rin-po-che bcud-kyi yang-snying thog-ma'i dras-thag gcod-pa spros-pa gcod-pa rtsa-ba'i rgyud, 2: 267b; 271b.

[\[22\]](#) lTa-ba la-shan chen-po rin-chen sgron-ma rtsa-ba'i rgyud, 1: 116b.

This text is unique in that in its preamble lays bare the complexity of the initial situation in terms that are specific to rdzogs-chen thinking. Analytically speaking, this complexity is constituted by a quincunx of (i) a locale that is unoriginated, unborn, an utter self-sameness (becoming) the dimensionality of meanings in statu nascendi, (as yet) unbroken (as to its expanse) and not being partial (to one aspect or another), and by virtue of its own most unique ability-to-be (itself) lying outside the scope of naming it, (ii) a teacher-revealer (as the ultimate Lord of (Being's) mystery who as (the whole's) self-originated energy surpasses (one's) intellect, (iii) a triple entourage with (each of its levels having) its own most unique ability-to-be, (iv) a time-space that (as time) has neither a beginning, a middle, nor an end, and (as space) has neither a perimeter nor any borderlines, and (v) the teaching that has no (classificatory) name, is such that with respect to it all limitations of representational thinking have dissolved, (but nonetheless) reveals the fact that the totality of the phenomenal (in its coming-to-presence) surpasses the intellect.

[\[23\]](#) There are five "feelers" (yan-lag) that as "rays of light" (zer) explore and suffuse with light the prospective domains into which they transform themselves.

[\[24\]](#) A lengthy interpretation of this threefold lighting-up has been given by Padmasambhava in his sPros-bral don-gsal, 1: 48a and 72b, the gist of which is (a) lighting-up in an impure (opaque) manner that is experienced as a going astray into mistaken identifications, (b) a lighting-up in a pure (symbol-rich and metaphoric) manner, and (c) a lighting-up that is purer than pure.

[\[25\]](#) The word gzhi-mo is not found in any available dictionary. Apparently it was coined by Padmasambhava himself and died out after his time.

[\[26\]](#) Suffice it to note that where four or six bar-do forms are discussed the emphasis is on dualities such as birth and death and so on.

[\[27\]](#) To give an example: the compound rtsal-rdzogs may be correctly rendered as "fully functional," but as an attribute of a lion (seng-ge) it emphasizes the graceful movements of this large cat. The expression seng-ge rtsal-rdzogs forms part of the title of a rdzogs-chen Tantra.

[\[28\]](#) Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud, 25: 366a.

[\[29\]](#) The popular mistranslation of this term by "sky-dancer," eagerly lapped up by Tibetans who should know better in their craving for an audience, is based on confusing 'gro "to go," "to walk" with the homonym bro "to stomp," "to dance."

[\[30\]](#) Nyi-zla'i 'od-'bar-ba bdud-rtsi rgya-mtsho 'khyil-ba, 3: 20b:

chos-nyid gting-mtha' yangs-pa

[31] Ibid., 21a:

gting-yang chos-nyid don-gyi gnas-lugs.

[32] For a detailed presentation see Herbert Guenther, *Light — An Emergent Phenomenon* (in: *The Cosmic Light*, vol. 1, nr. 4, Autumn 1999, pp.17-28).

[33] Faust I, "Night," v. 534.

[34] Nyi-zla 'od-'bar mkha'-klong rnam-dag rgya-mtsho klong-gsal, 1: 122b.

[35] Ibid., fol. 123a.

[36] They are an all-around searching, a settling on one topic, and a declaring of "that's it."

[37] Though usually rendered as "ignorance," ma-rig describes a dynamic "system" such as a human being as to its cognitive capacity and excitability as not being quite what it may be. It does not deny its cognitive character that operates in the framework of things. By contrast, ye-shes as functions of the supraconscious intensity are concerned with meanings.

[38] These are according to Padmasambhava's sPros-bral don-gsal, 1: 13b, the whole's creativity (chos-nyid) being mistaken for something "objective" (yul), the whole's supraconscious intensity (rig-pa) being mistaken for something "subjective" (sems), and the whole's five luminescences ('od-lnga) being mistaken for one's body (lus). In greater detail these three modes of going astray are presented in Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud, 25: 366a-367a.

[39] They refer to the outsiders, the non-Buddhists as "extremists" (mu-stegs-pa), and the insiders, the Buddhists as upholders of the Hinayana and Mahayana form of Buddhism.

[40] Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud, 25: 352b.

[41] Ibid., fol. 366a.

[42] sNang-gsal spu-gri, 2: 299a. The main thrust of this work is the elucidation of the rtsal-snang as the force of one's going astray into mistaken identifications ('khrol-pa) and of what one can do to reverse this trend.

[43] The whole Nam-mkha'-'bar-ba'i rgyud, 1: 89b-100b is devoted to the sems/sems-nyid problem.

[44] sNang-gsal spu-gri, 2: 295b.

[45] Four modes are mentioned in Padmasambhava's sPros-bral don-gsal, 1: 73a. But this account, as it has been handed down, is more concerned with the transition of the 'char-lugs into the chags-lugs the morphogenesis of a concrete human individual. Six modes are listed in Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa Dri-med-'od-zer's writings. Eight modes, including Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa Dri-

med-'od-zer's six modes, are listed in the Nyi-ma dang zla-ba kha-sbyor chen-po gsang-ba'i rgyud, 4: 137b, and the Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ma nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud, 25: 366a. This account is incomplete with respect to the eighth phase space.

The difference between 'char-lugs and shar-lugs is that the former term refers to the "process proper," while the latter refers to the "outcome" of the process.

[46] Nyi-ma dang zla-ba kha-sbyor chen-po gsang-ba'i rgyud, 4: 137b.

[47] The term zang-thal, here, for want of a better term, rendered insubstantiality, describes the feeling one experiences when one comes up to what seems a solid wall and can go "right through" it.

[48] The mother-child idea is a favorite image with Padmasamhhava. He speaks of it in descriptive terms of inseparability (dbyer-med) and mutual recognition (ngo-sprod). The decisive point for him is the felt quality of this image as the pre-primordial primordial darkness-gone/light-having-spread experience (ye-sangs-rgyas).

[49] Die Philosophie des Als Ob (1911, translated into English under the title Philosophy of As If (1924).

[50] For a trenchant critique of any form of reductionism see Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen, *Figments of Reality*, s.v. reductionism.

[51] On the many meanings and the respectability this word has acquired in modern thought see Joanne Wieland-Burston, *Chaos and Order in the World of the Psyche*, chapter 4, pp.70-99.

[52] See my "Mandala and/or dkyil-'khor" in *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, volume 18, number 2.

[53] *Projection and Re-Collection in Jungian Psychology: Reflections of the Soul*, pp. 57-61.