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THE COMPLEXITY OF THE INITIAL CONDITION

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SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

Hermeneutics is the art of bringing out the hidden meaning of signs/symbols and even whole texts. From the wider perspective of ontology, the task of hermeneutics is the disclosure of the meaning of World as it appears through signs in materialized guise. (p. 285)

Whether we be scholars, poets or unbiased observers, attentively looking at our environing World, we find in it clarity, order, and harmony ... World appears to us as a text. Through their accessibility by our consciousness, these texts connect us with World. (p. 39)

—V. V. Nalimov & J. A. Drogalina, *Real'nost' nereal'nogo* (1995)
(Quotes trans., H. Guenther)

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Nothing whatever happens in a vacuum, but always in a richly orchestrated and intricately ordered context. In other words, in the beginning—this magic word that has fascinated humankind throughout history—there is complexity, a dynamic *holon* or *holoplenum*,¹ a creative field of which the experiencer is an integral aspect. As such, the *holoplenum* or, to use a more common and evocative word, *chaos*, can be said to be the matrix of a human being's meaningful existence.

In the unfolding of this complexity, numbers have been particularly important in those traditions where, in addition to having quantitative properties, they also have symbolic significance. Jointly with the number Three, which is the number of the unfolding process, the number Five, which is the number of a solid structure, plays a dominant role in Buddhist thought and practice, because it is the midpoint of the square conceived of as a tetrad (in purely mathematical terms) or a quaternity (in more personalistic terms) and visibly presented in an almost endless variety of what has become known (and popularized) by its original Sanskrit name *mandala*. As was to be expected when this term became known in the Western context, it was given a static connotation.² At that time, as is still the case today, nothing was known of the dynamic interpretation *Padmasambhava*—this enigmatic person from Ugyan—had given this word in its Tibetan rendering *dkyil-'khor*, which seems to have anticipated J. A. Wheeler's idea of a "pregeometry" (Wheeler & Patton, 1977, p. 32) and David Bohm's idea of the "implicate order" (1980, s.v.). *Padmasambhava*'s own hermeneutical interpretation of the term *dkyil-'khor*, in which the infinite and the finite, the cosmic and the anthropic (humanly experienceable) intermingle, runs as follows:³

- dkyil* means the vortex of Being's (the whole's) energy,
- 'khor* means Being's (the whole's) primordial symbolic pregnancy (*ka-dag*)
and non-origination (*skye-med*);
- dkyil* means Being (the whole as) a ground that has been there since its
beginningless beginning;
- 'khor* means Being's (the whole's) lighting-up and (its) interpretation (in
terms of) *samsara* and *nirvana*;

dkyil means Being's (the whole's field-like) dimensionality (in which meanings (are stored),
'khor means Being's (the whole's) brilliance as radiant (*gsal*) and symbolic (*dag*).

In this passage special attention should be paid to the terms “primordial symbolic pregnancy” (*ka-dag*) and “non-origination” (*skye-med*) as well as to the compound “radiant-symbolic” (*gsal-dag*). From the perspective of the Aristotelian categories that have dominated and still dominate our (Western) languages, the Tibetan term *ka-dag* is both an “adjective” and a “noun.” Literally, that is, mechanistically rendered, this term means something like “pure (*dag*) from the beginning (*ka*)”—*ka* being the first letter of the Tibetan alphabet. The word thus intimates a “first utterance” that, in the words of Arturo Fallico (1962), “asserts nothing and demonstrates nothing, but which nonetheless initiates everything by making it possible for us to speak at all” (p. 69). In this sense, rather than in the Aristotelian sense, the term *ka-dag* can be said to be the expression of what Alfred North Whitehead has called a “vector feeling-tone” that is inseparable from experiencing the whole’s symbolic pregnancy and transparency-translucency. But, above all, it is the ontological implication of this Tibetan term that has prompted me to render it by “symbolic pregnancy,” a phrase coined by Ernst Cassirer and explicated by him as follows:⁴

By symbolic pregnancy we mean the way [die Art] in which a perception as a “sensory” experience [”sinnliches” Erlebnis] contains at the same time a certain nonintuitive “meaning” [”Sinn”] which it immediately and concretely represents.

Similarly, the term *skye-med* is an ontological concept signifying the “nonexistence” (*med*) of the whole in its symbolic pregnancy as a *thing* that can be said to undergo “birth” or “origination” (*skye*). In any case we must be cautious in using our categories when probing a different way of thinking. Slightly more complicated and calling for utmost caution is the compound *gsal-dag* in which two “contrary” notions, “radiant” (*gsal*) as movement and “symbolic” (*dag*) as rest, have been fused into a single dynamic notion.

Since we as human beings, even in our embodied “state,” are an integral aspect of Being (the whole), we are *eo ipso* luminous beings. The trouble is that we constantly forget our luminous heritage and look for it where it cannot be found and console ourselves with artifacts. Padmasambhava is quite explicit in this respect. His words are:⁵

A *dkyil-'khor* need not be painted somewhere, it is completely present in your psyche,⁶
 A *dkyil-'khor* that is being painted with the help of natural colors is something artificial (and)
 Each and every artificial *dkyil-'khor* is going to collapse,
 Therefore, the *dkyil-'khor* that is (your) self-originated psyche (*rang-byung sems*) (in its triune dynamics of)
 Being its own most unique ability-to-be (*rang-bzhin*), (its vibrant) substance (*ngo-bo*), and (its) concerned spirituality (*thugs-rje*)
 Is the primordial and very first *dkyil-'khor*.

However important a role the number five plays in an individual’s being-in-the-world, in both its pointing to the psyche’s “pregeometry” or the “implicate order” and in its application by the individual who quite literally and figuratively orients himself in his environing world by geometrizing and turning it into an “explicate order” (in the words of David Bohm) according to the four cardinal points that go out from him and converge on him as the center, there is, for Padmasambhava, another quincunx. It describes the complexity of “experiencing the

primary experience or initial condition” in images that have been taken from a person’s everyday situational experience, reverberating with a deeply felt understanding of the symbolic pregnancy of this experience. This quincunx is described as consisting of a place (*gnas*), a teacher (*ston-pa*), an entourage or audience (*'khor*), a teaching (*bstan-pa*), and (the complexity’s) temporality (*dus*). Superficially looked at from a numerological point of view, one is tempted to correlate this quincunx with the Pythagorean Five as the union of the first male number, Three,—the teacher, the entourage, and the teaching: a uni-trinity—and the first female number, Two,—the place and the time (temporality, to be exact). However, nothing could be farther from Padmasambhava’s way of thinking. His “visionary” thinking suffused with the “felt” sense of being, starts from an undivided whole that, as far as anything can be said without turning the immediacy of its experience (its *Erleben*) into a reflected-on experience (its *Erfahrung*), is sheer energy (*snying-po*) with no (known) origin (*skye-med*)⁷ and no name (*ming-med*).⁸ On a more individual level this experience presents itself as a complementarity of thinking’s thinking (*sems-nyid*) = excitation/ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*), and the giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*), a field-like dimensionality replete with insubstantial codes as potential meanings (*chos-kyi dbyings*) that become real meanings (*chos*) once they are decoded. Because of the experiencer’s omnipresence in each and every phase of the at-first-undivided whole’s unfolding into its explicate richness, these principles of intensity and ex-tensity that constitute the very dynamism of what Niels Bohr (1885-1962) has termed the principle of complementarity, assume a personalistic character imaged in gender-specific forms. Thus thinking’s thinking (*sems-nyid*) is imaged and, maybe felt, as a sort of proto-masculinity and envisioned as one’s archetypal Father (*yab*), and the giving birth to thoughts and meanings (*chos-nyid*) is imaged and, maybe felt, as a sort of proto-femininity and envisioned as one’s archetypal Mother (*yum*); both exclude and yet include each other by defining the other. None can be without the other and none can be subordinated to the other. This is what is meant by their inseparability and indivisibility (*dbyer-med*). The most important point to note in the Buddhist conception of the principle of complementarity so pervasive of Padmasambhava’s thinking, is the fact that the “masculine” pole (thinking’s thinking, the ecstatic intensity, the archetypal Father) does not do the actual thinking (or what we understand by “thinking”). The best we can say is that this “masculine” pole merely provides the momentum in the unfolding of the overall “intelligent” universe (including us as one of its formations). The actual thinking, which by virtue of its being insightful-appreciative is “creative” (and must not be confused with some demiurgic manufacturing or tinkering), is the dynamism of the “feminine” pole in the principle of complementarity. The Buddhist and, in particular, Padmasambhava’s nomenclature is pre-eminently “symbolic” and substantiates Erich Neumann’s (1959/1974) words:

...we have come to view symbolic experience as a primary existence: the one reality is experienced adequately and as a whole by a psyche that has not yet been split by the separation of the systems, or that has ceased to be split. (p. 172)

For Padmasambhava, wholeness, Man’s (a human being’s) real being, is not reducible to any one particular existent, it is a complex pattern in which each aspect intertwines with the other. Though presented as a quincunx, it is not a composite of disparate entities, but a holistic space-time (horizontal-vertical) experience that as the “beginning of all beginnings” is pre-ontological and pre-reflective, the starting point of the individual experiencer’s becoming enworlded by leaving his real home and going astray into the fictions and mistaken identifications of his own making, a kind of detour in the attempt to penetrate into his real being and to become again his real being, because he is and has been his real being.

Within this primary complexity two images stand out conspicuously: the image of the teacher and the image of the entourage or audience. The implication is that what follows takes on the

character of a dialogue that, on closer inspection, turns out to be the whole's listening to, communicating with, and understanding itself.

LISTENING, COMMUNICATING, AND UNDERSTANDING

Since the time of Plato and his followers who adopted a rational(istic) approach to human existence, the oculocentric perspective has become the dominant theme and paradigm of (Western) thinking. Other no-less-important facets of this holon have quite literally been lost sight of, or even, deliberately been suppressed and ignored, much to the detriment of the experiencer's incontestable presence. One of these facets is the experiencer's ability to listen. Unlike "ordinary" or "outer" hearing that is for the most part just a mechanical registering of noise and remains superficial and inattentive, listening as a kind of "inner" hearing, by its very *innerness*, involves the experiencer in many ways. Above all, it brings about an intensification of feeling that dissolves any separation and isolation into which the experiencer has been tricked by his ego-centric and ego-logical way of seeing. "The eye says I" is a statement by the late Krishnamurti. The implication of this statement is that the eye-I's insistence on distance leads to the growing alienation of the experiencer from himself and the rest of his enviroing world. By contrast, listening restores the experiencer's *felt sense* of belonging (*Zugehörigkeit*)⁹ to a larger and wider dimension of Being, simply because by virtue of his being a part of the holon he is already *attuned* to the sonorous-radiant energy of this whole.¹⁰ In speaking of a sonorous-radiant energy I attempt to avoid the fallacy which derives directly from the linearity of rational thought of giving preference and priority to any one of a human being's sensuous experiences. In the act of listening the experiencer not only opens himself up to another presence, but also allows himself to be affected by this presence. This is to say that from the very beginning a kind of interaction between and intermingling of the experiencer and the experienced presence is already at work.

The prominence of the oral and aural functions in the sociocultural context of Buddhism is well attested to by the fact that, with the exception of later scholastic texts and literary compositions, early Buddhist writings, be they in Pali or in Sanskrit, emphasize the importance of listening by beginning their disquisitions in the form of a dialogue, in which one member of the audience rises and asks a question that is then answered by the teacher after he has come out of a particular trance, with the terse statement *evam mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye...*, that is traditionally and mechanically rendered as, "Thus I have heard. Once ..." The Tibetans, at least those who belonged to the older (*mying-ma*) tradition, such as Padmasambhava and his contemporaries, interpreted and translated this phrase as '*di-skad bdag-gis thos-pa'i dus-gcig-na*, which, as far as any literal "translation" goes, means "Once when (*dus-gcig-na*) I (*bdag-gis*) was listening (*thos-pa'i*) to a voice (resounding throughout the whole that is) Being (*'di-skad*),..."¹¹ Leaving aside the many hermeneutical interpretations of the other terms in this phrase, the '*di* in the unitary expression '*di-skad* has always been understood as referring to the mysterious "place" (*gnas*) of Being's luminous presence into which the experiencer feels himself drawn and transported after he has disentangled himself from the restrictive confines of the materiality-bound ego-object structure and after he has become open to his wider visionary and auditory possibilities; and the *skad* has always been understood as referring to the holon's (Being's and, in the narrower sense, the place's) radiant sonorousness-as-it-presences-to-the-listener-and-visionary(rolled into one). Here, in what may be said to be the primordial situation in which the experiencer finds himself, the individual is quite literally getting in touch with what constitutes his authenticity or is perhaps in touch with what gives him the words to speak of what he has "felt" and still "feels," has "heard" and still "hears." In so "re-sonating" with the sonorous quality of the listener's authenticity or real being, the words are highly evocative and make the listener aware of his primordial attunement to the wholeness of Being. But before such speaking becomes possible, he (the listener) or we must have already heard, as Heidegger (1975/1985) convincingly argues (p.

65). Here again a word of caution is necessary. The words “before” and “already” must not be understood in their traditional temporal connotations. Rather, “listening” and “speaking” go together. This togetherness reflects the whole’s indivisibility and inseparability, captured somehow in the phrase “I can hear myself speaking.” It is therefore not surprising that Padmasambhava, for whom the experience of wholeness as it emerges along the way of (self)-realization is of paramount importance, begins many of his profounder writings with the introductory statement *'di-skad bdag-gis bshad-pa'i dus-gcig-na* “Once when (*dus-gcig-na*) I (*bdag-gis*) spoke (*bshad-pa'i*) (of and by) the voice (resounding throughout the whole that is) Being (*'di-skad*),...”¹² It goes without saying that this kind of speaking is more than a mere speech-act performance. Rather, it is an “inspired” speaking that is as much a “calling,” a drawing attention, as it is “communication,” though not in the sense of a transfer of knowledge, but rather a sharing of knowledge and in-formation (*in*-formation) in the true sense of its holistic character.¹³

Borrowing from and elaborating on the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and David Levin, we can say that a human being’s capacities for listening and speaking are each an “organismic a priori,” an “*ontological* organ,” inherent in and fine-tuned to and by the open dimensionality of Being-as-a-whole. This has important consequences. By our listening we become attuned to Being in its quality as a sonorous field; by our speaking we respond to the “call” of this Being-as-a-whole; and, by using words attuned to and in-tune-with Being’s open dimensionality, we set the tone for our being-in-a-world as our possibilities-to-be-realized. In the process of their realization the primordial attunement to Being-as-a-whole is brought to light and into the open, by a pre-conceptual, pre-egological, and pre-reflective experience that constitutes the core of our deepest and, at the same time, most *ecstatic* (ek-static) being and understanding or, if one prefers, *innerstanding*.

Throughout his writings, Padmasambhava’s emphasis is on what, for lack of a better expression, is best said to be an “existential (holistic) understanding,” because, in his own words, “a person who possesses the certitude (that comes with an existential) understanding cannot go astray into samsara.”¹⁴ Therefore also some of his disquisitions start with the laconic statement *'di-skad bdag-gis rtogs-pa'i dus-gcig-na* “Once when (*dus-gcig-na*) I (*bdag-gis*) understood (*rtogs-pa'i*) the voice (resounding throughout the whole that is) Being (*'di-skad*),...”¹⁵

Elsewhere¹⁶ he brings out the connectedness of this existential understanding with “hearing” (listening) by the following opening sentence: “Once when (*dus-gcig-na*) I (*bdag-gis*) by listening (*go-zhing*) understood (*rtogs*) the voice (resounding throughout the whole that is) Being (*'di-skad*),...”

But his most revealing statement in this context is the phrase:¹⁷

Once when (*dus-gcig-na*), having understood (*rtogs-nas*) the voice (resounding throughout the whole that is) Being (*'di-skad*) to be the Being-that-I-am (*rang-bzhin*),...”¹⁸

Padmasambhava’s profound insight that such existential understanding involves more than some ordinary and (more or less) passive cognition, is intimated by the terse statement:¹⁹

I show the means of effecting an (existential) understanding by way of allegories and symbols (*brda*’).

It would lead us too far away from the topic under consideration to go into details about the importance of allegories and symbols. Suffice it to say that for Padmasambhava allegories and symbols not only appeal to, but also are intelligible only to persons of the highest intellectual

acumen.²⁰ In this context it also may not be out of place to quote Martin Heidegger's (1988) pertinent observation concerning understanding:

...understanding is not at all primarily a cognition but—since existence is indeed more than mere cognition in the usual spectator sense of knowledge and such knowledge presupposes existence—a basic determination of existence itself. (p. 276)

Unlike hearing as mere noise-perception, listening (*thos-pa*) draws the experiencer into the presence of an imaginal reality that in its thereness (*gnas*) transcends—transcendence is thereness from a dynamic perspective—the world of sense by highlighting the value character of the whole's complexity that lights up in images calling for an understanding (*rtogs*) that, in turn, sets the tone for the experiencer's being-in-the-world. In this primordial lighting-up the complexity-that-is-Being-as-a-whole, in short, the holon, displays itself to the experiencer (who from the perspective of wholeness is none other than this wholeness) and appeals to his visual/visionary capacity. In other words, "listening" and "seeing" go together; it is not that the one precedes the other. Their togetherness has been poetically and musically expressed in one of Georg Friedrich Händel's *Deutsche Arien*:

Meine Seele hört im Sehen
Wie den Schöpfer zu erhöhen
Alles jauchzet, alles lacht.
[My soul listens whilst seeing
How, in extolling its creator,
Everything jubilates and everything laughs].

But just as listening is more than a passive auditory perception, so also vision is more than a passive visual perception. Rather, it is an active "sighting" and, when it takes place or, more exactly speaking, is enacted, a pattern or *gestalt* is "called up" before the mind's eye and "placed" in a wider or narrower circuit of the *Da* (there) so that it *remains* there for itself (*Da-sein*). Padmasambhava draws a subtle distinction-without-separation between Being-as-such (Being-as-a-whole, Being-in-general, *spyi-gzhi*) and Being-as-there (Being-in-its-thereness, Being-in-its-abidingness, *gnas-lugs*) for itself and us. Although Being-as-such may be spoken of as the primordial ground-in-general,²¹ it is not an entity nor can it be identified with some other (kind of) being. Padmasambhava seems to have made this abundantly clear in the following laconic statement:²²

The substance (of which Being-as-a-whole is made, *ngo-bo*) is (what is called) the ground; it is not a particular existent (*ngos-po*).

However, matters become more complicated (for us at least, because of the fateful word "is" in our language that tends to blur the difference between the ontic and the ontological) when "substance" (*ngo-bo*) is used interchangeably with "energy" (*snying-po*) and when the latter is used appositionally with such technical terms as *spyi-gzhi*, *spyi-sa*, and *gnas-lugs*. Although all these terms imply the presence of the experiencer, they are primarily ontological concepts that defy any reduction to what is commonly, that is, rationally known. If anything can be said about the cover term or overarching idea of "energy," we can only follow Padmasambhava and state that it is:

- (1) uncontrived (*ma-bcos-pa*),
- (2) impartial [not siding with any one regional section] (*phyogs-lhung med-pa*),
- (3) unbroken (*rgya-chad med-pa*), and
- (4) having come about by itself (*rang-las byung-ba*).

The last description in this set of four descriptions intimates that energy and/or Being-as-a-whole is nothing static or absolute (in which case it would be of no concern or interest for us as Being's experiencers), but an ongoing process in which we are deeply involved and which is both process *and* structure, in other words, a process structure. In an intriguing dialogue that "jumps" from one ontological term to another, Padmasambhava lets the "little Man (of Light) who is all-excitation" (*kun-rig khye'u-chung*) put the following question to the teacher "Lord of the mysteries" (*gsang-bdag*):²³

How does out of the Dasein (*gnas-lugs*), the whole's consistency with itself
and everything else (*mnyam-nyid*), the common level (*spyi-sa*) of
our being

(In which) what is to be the status of a spiritually awake person and what
is to be the status of a person caught up in his opinions are, as far
as Being goes, (still) one (and the same),

The duality of samsara and nirvana come about?

Padmasambhava then lets the teacher "Lord of the mysteries" give the following answer:²⁴

Being-in-general (*spyi-gzhi*) [or] the Dasein-(that-we-are) is like camphor
(when it is as yet)

Not broken up into being a healing or a poisonous substance;

Both (its healing and poisoning properties) are one and the same as far as
its common level (*spyi-sa*) goes, but

Under (suitable) conditions it manifests its dual character.

As to the common level (of ours in which) the nameless [energy] of Being-
in-general (reverberates)

There is no break-up into either samsara or nirvana.

In this common level (of ours) what is to be the status of a spiritually awake
person and what is to be the status of a person caught up in his
opinions, are (still) one and the same:

Under (suitable) conditions (this common level of ours) manifests itself as
the gate (through which the light-that-is-Being-as-such) dawns
(upon us) or as the gate (through which) we go astray.

Elsewhere he laconically states:²⁵

The energy of Being-in-general (reverberates in what) is the common level
of ours [be we spiritually awake beings or just ordinary beings
caught up in mere opinions],

(As our) ultimate Dasein it does not exist as anything (particular).

This statement can only mean that the Dasein-that-we-are is not something "given once for all," but an open possibility that "defines" itself as to what it will be:²⁶

The defining (agency) of Being-in-general (or) Being-as-Dasein (or) Being-
as-energy Is Being itself.

In a certain sense, Being-as-a-whole (*gzhi*) in its dynamics undergoes several closures of itself and becomes Being-in-general (*spyi-gzhi*) that continues closing in on itself and thus becomes the common level of ours (*spyi-sa*) of which we are immediately aware as the-Dasein-that-we-are (*gnas-lugs*). Each of these closures constitutes a self-limiting boundary, as does any *gestalt*, but this self-limiting boundary has not yet been turned into what Martin Heidegger has called *das Gestell*, a placing that fixates what is there for conceptual grasping and in so doing prescinds from experiencing it vividly, *feelingly*. The "place" where things are going to happen, in the narrower sense of the word, where a dialogue between us as listeners and,

hopefully, “learners” and our real being as the “teacher” is going to take place, is an imaginal reality, neither “here” nor “there,” but the ongoing self-expression of the dynamics of Being-as-a-whole. In other words, Being-as-a-whole doubles as Being’s thereness and the experiencer’s *Befindlichkeit*, his or her primordially bodily felt sense-of-being-in-the-world, of-being-in-a-“place.”

THE PLACE

The moment we as experiencers are transported by Being’s calling into Being’s “place” (*gnas*) that now turns out to be Being’s visibility, a concomitant change occurs in us who, whilst still listening, become admirers of the immensities that unfold before our gaze and hold us spellbound. This unfolding takes place from deep within ourselves, spreading far and wide, and soaring high. It is the lighting-up of the light that makes us luminous beings. All this takes “place,” is “seen,” and “felt” ecstatically, that is, ek-statically standing outside the self-imposed *Gestell*, through images of grandeur and beauty. As yet none of these stand for anything “real” in that sense of representability which is but an anaemic by-product of the image-projecting activity of the experiencer’s beingness. Because of their transparency and fluidity these images intermingle and resonate with significance. Most frequently used in the description of the place (into which the listener is transported and where he finds himself gazing at and admiring the immensity and beauty of this world) are two sets of images that reflect the felt sense of a quiet immensity and a swirling motion.

The first “set” of images illustrating Being’s seeming quietude consists of the image of the sky (*mkha’*, *nam-mkha’*) out of which clouds may and do come-to-presence, and of the image of a field-like expanse (*dbyings*) in which (possible) meanings are stored and wait to be born. Both images are suggestive of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s idea of “dimensionality”²⁷ and of Martin Heidegger’s explication of dimension as “stretch.”²⁸ Because of their “spatial” affinity, *mkha’* (suggesting intangibility) and *dbyings* (suggesting tangibility) often form a compound: *mkha’-dbyings*.

The second “set” of images illustrating Being’s dynamics consists of the image of a vortex (*klong*) and the image of a radiant light (*’od*, *’od-gsal*). From among these two images, the image of a vortex implies what we nowadays would call “turbulence,” of which we know that it is characterized by vortexes and spirals that allow the whole universe to evolve and in this evolution “emit light” in the manner of a photon field. Here, our own language expresses the intertwining of “rest” (Being’s dimensionality and/or field-like expanse) and “movement” (Being’s swirling and spiralling in the manner of a vortex and its radiance). This intertwining, linguistically expressed by the compound *mkha’-klong*, is poetically presented by Padmasambhava in the following three stanzas:²⁹

Out of the [calm] vortex center, the Dasein (that underlies our individual being), [an evolutionary phase of] the sky-(dimensionality’s spiralling)-vortex, transparently pure (in its presence-for-us-as-its-observing experiencers),
 The [creative] functions of (Being as) a radiant light have ceaselessly manifested themselves. [That is to say]
 The turbulence (in what is) Being-as-such [or, more precisely, this *seinsmäßige* turbulence] has manifested itself as my [creative] functionality, [which is to say that]
 (Being’s) radiant light is the [creative] functionality of my disporting myself,³⁰

and³¹

Into the energy of (Being's) field-like expanse where meanings are stored
 (and waiting to be born), that is the sky (in its being) a vortex,
 pure in its presence-for-us-as-its-observing-experiencers,
 The five luminosities (that are the manifestations of) Being's turbulence
 dissolve in the vortex (that is Being's) energy;
 (As this energy's) five functionalities (that manifest themselves as) five rays
 of light, they dissolve in the vortex (that is Being's) energy;
 (As) a blazing light that in its voiding (any structuration to persist) and (in
 this voiding) shines brilliantly, it dissolves in the vortex (that is
 Being's) energy;
 (As Being's) cognitive capacity (that may develop as its spiritual) excitability
 (into the experiencer's supraconscious ecstatic intensity) or (into the
 experiencer's spiritually unexcited level of) organismic thinking, it
 dissolves in the vortex (that is Being's) energy,

and³²

In the enormous vortex (that is Being's) sky-like dimensionality (and) field-
 like expanse as a radiant light
 There (are to be found) grouped together all the branchings (into which, as
 the fundamental forces that go into the making of our concrete
 existence,) the rays of light (that present the) functionality of Being
 (that is) self-originated, (have congealed).

Admittedly, what in the Tibetan original is poetic diction with "coded" intuitions playing the dominant role, loses its poetic character when expressed in a different idiom that primarily bases itself on syntactically constructed sentences that by the very manner in which they relate the key factors of their subject matter, leave little room for the reader's imagination without which no real understanding is possible. Nonetheless, the general trend of these "coded" messages is clear. Out of Being that, ontologically speaking, in its wholeness is non-origination (unborn, ungenerated, *skye-med*) and, experientially speaking, is of symbolic pregnance (*ka-dag*),³³ there evolves through its inherent dynamics an "imaginal" world that "incorporates" its prospective experiencer for whom this world is still symbolic in its being a "pure" presence for him (*rnam-par dag-pa*).³⁴ This purity as a kind of reflected-on experience (*Erfahrung*) as contrasted with the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) of Being's symbolic pregnance, is imaged in the shape of the sky's (intangible) immensity and (seemingly tangible) expanse of a field-like dimensionality, on the one hand, and a swirling vortex and a radiant light, on the other hand. Still, these images intertwine and only the inability of language to express contrary notions (like rest and movement) as a single dynamic notion leads us to separate that which is inseparable. The very dynamics in this inseparability of Being-as-the-whole is termed its functionality that, by virtue of its never being at rest, "shakes up" wholeness and lets it shine as an imaginal realm that like Being itself is "self-originated" (*rang-byung*), but in this being shaken up by its functionality's rays of light "materializes" itself into the fundamental forces that become the building-blocks of our existence (which in this view is more what we would call a standing wave pattern). In Padmasambhava's words:³⁵

The self-originated (wholeness as an imaginal world) is shaken up by its
 functionality (into) rays of light (that are the whole's) branchings:
 In brief, when this quincunx of branchings has come about,
 It is from this quincunx that (the whole's) going astray into the external and
 the internal, the universe as a container and (the living beings in it)
 as the elixir in it, takes place.
 (In other words), (the whole's) excitability ceaselessly goes astray into the
 five fundamental forces [that go into the making of our existence].

In more prosaic language the above images may be said to pertain to the cosmic scale of Padmasambhava's anthropocosmic universe. Their recurrent qualifications as being of symbolic pregnance and of being observably pure as well as, incidentally, being precious (*rin-po-che*) must not be conceived of as adjectives (accidentals) to the nouns to which they are attached. Rather, they are *feelings*, more precisely, vector feeling-tones that are inseparable from the experience of the various images and, for this very reason, imbue them with significance.

By contrast, the images of a mandala (*dkyil-'khor*), a palatial mansion (*gzhal-yas khang*), a citadel (*pho-brang*), and a temple (*lha-khang*)³⁶ seem to pertain to the anthropic (human) dimension of the anthropocosmic universe. As is so often the case, appearances are deceptive. These images serve to illustrate the dynamics of the whole closing progressively in on itself and, in so doing, *prefigure* our humanness and its situatedness (*Befindlichkeit*). Let us assess these four closures of which two are pre-ontological and two are pre-egological, in greater detail.

(a) The mandala

As we have already noted before, from a dynamic perspective the mandala spans the cosmic and the anthropic.³⁷ Here, three additional statements may be adduced to show that the mandala is primarily a luminous experience of the whole's self-ordering dynamics that prefigures a possible direction for the experiencer's attunement to his luminous nature. The first statement runs as follows:³⁸

(Being's "place") is a mandala that has not been painted; rather, it is self-originated, in a blaze of a variety of colored luminosities.

The second statement declares:³⁹

(Being's "place") is a mandala that has not been painted, but is (just) there as having neither a circumference nor a center.

This definition of the mandala suggests that the whole's self-ordering dynamics is about to geometrize itself into a "centered four" that may be visualized as a square in a circle or as a circle in a square. Either of these patterns is used in painted presentations. More important, this definition links Padmasambhava's insight with the Western medieval definition of God (or World) as an infinite sphere—*Deus (vel) mundus est sphaera infinita, cuius centrum est ubique et circumferentia nusquam* " (God (or World) is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere)."⁴⁰

The third statement suggesting a kind of proto-existential structure of a human being's luminous nature, runs as follows:⁴¹

(Being's "place") is a mandala that cannot be fathomed by rational thought and that, in the absence of any obscurations, is radiantly alight by virtue of its own most unique ability-to-be.

(b) The palatial mansion

In the course of the whole's closing in on itself, this initial self-geometrization, resulting in a basic pattern of a world with the as yet virtual experiencer at the center, undergoes a further transformation into a palatial mansion (*gzhal-yas khang*). Literally rendered this term means a "house (*khang*) exceeding measurability (*gzhal-yas*).⁴² The term thus presents us with the

paradox of an open immensity and of a closed space approximating privacy and conveying a sense of security. This palatial mansion, as Padmasambhava states:⁴²

is not a palatial mansion that has been erected (like an ordinary building),
it is the bursting-forth of five kinds of rays of light that are (the whole's)
originary awareness modes.

Here the luminosities of the mandala have assumed distinct cognitive qualities that are "originary" (*ye*) in the sense of giving the experiencer a deeper and more insightful awareness (*shes*) of himself and his world.⁴³

Elsewhere Padmasambhava speaks of this luminous palatial mansion in terms of its preciousness (*rin-po-che*) or *felt* value. This preciousness is (the whole's) luminosity (*Lichthaftigkeit*) in its multiple nuances:⁴⁴

A palatial mansion that is thoroughly ablaze in various luminous
intensities (that constitute its) preciousness.

Lastly, in a slightly elliptical manner, he states:⁴⁵

A house in which are gathered into a unity various (intensities of light
that constitute) its preciousness.

(c) The citadel

While the palatial mansion, the house beyond measurability (*gzhal-yas khang*) conveys the feeling of some spatial dimensionality that extends into the far "out there," even if we dwell in it "in here," the image of a citadel (*pho-brang*) suggests some spatial dimensionality that is experienced and felt as the "intimate values of inside space" (Bachelard, 1969, p. 3). Thus, in the associative style so typical for him, Padmasambhava declares:⁴⁶

In a citadel (that is) the all-ground [the experiencer's ontic foundation] (as
enormous as Being's) sky-like dimensionality and field-like
expanse,

In the radiant light (that is Being's) giving birth to thoughts and meanings
(in the shape of a) mandala, pure (for us as its observers), ...

Lastly, in connection with the citadel, another passage that presents a veritable gallery of images, by now already familiar, may be quoted:⁴⁷

A place that by virtue of its being its own most unique ability-to-be is pure
(and symbolically challenging for us as its observers) [turned into] our ontic
foundation citadel; an encompassing and overarching enormous mandala
(expressing) the ontic foundation (in its dynamic as) thinking's thinking; a
vortex of an unceasingly shining radiant light; the sky-like dimensionality
of (our) enworldedness⁴⁸ (that is the concretization of the) rays of light (that
are) the functionality of (Being's) preciousness; a (brilliantly) radiant light
in (view of the nonexistence of anything to obscure it); the beingness of
Being, pure (and symbolically challenging for us as its observers); a place
that stays unbroken and impartial.

In addition to its intimating the sense of preciousness, the citadel has "political" overtones. It is the residence of the king who is the anthropocosmic whole's supraconscious ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*), imaged as a teacher-king (*ston-pa'i rgyal-po*) or as the teacher *par*

excellence (*ston-pa*), not a person's ego that is but one pole in an ephemeral structure of subject and object and basically presents an aspect of a broken whole.

(d) The temple

Closely related to the felt intimacy of one's inner space, described in terms of a citadel, there is another aspect of this felt intimacy that adds a deeply felt sense of wonderment and awe to the imposing loftiness of the citadel. This felt intimacy is termed a temple (*lha-khang*). But as the Tibetan term intimates it is not a structure of stone and wood, but the experiencer's very *Befindlichkeit*, his being-in-a-world that expresses his divine/human reality. In speaking of a temple, Padmasambhava marshals all the images he had used to "describe" the palatial mansion and the citadel. Thus he says about the temple:⁴⁹

In a temple that in its dimensionality is disposed to become alight (and if it does so) to radiate in its own light; the vortex of (the whole's) thereness (as the presence of its) preciousness; the field-like expanse of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts and meanings; the sky-like dimensionality of a radiant light; the locus of (the whole's) self-originatedness; (our) ontic foundation [turned into] a citadel; a radiant light, pure (and symbolically challenging for us as its observers); a mandala, unfathomable by representational thinking and, (in view of) the nonexistence of anything to obscure (its luster), a radiant light (that is a light) by virtue of its own most unique ability-to-be; unbroken as to its total size; (impartial and) unbiased as to its parts; intangible as to [any presumed] limits; a preciousness and (for its observer a symbolically challenging) purity, and a radiant light; ...

Looked at from the "outside," that is, from the perspective of the detached observer who, even if he does not like to admit it, is already mediately affected by what he observes, the apparent sequence of the three dimensionalities of a palatial mansion, a citadel, and a temple, seems to imply a progressive narrowing of the visual field, somehow prefigured (not predetermined) by the self-geometrization of Being's wholeness into a mandala or kind of anthropocosmic blueprint. Looked at from "within," that is, from the perspective of the engaged experiencer, this process of a growing interiorization is seen and, above all, *felt* as his coming into his own. Lastly, from the perspective of wholeness itself, this "coming-into-one's-own" means that wholeness becomes ever more self-reflective which, however paradoxical it may sound, is to say that wholeness is also auto-catalytic in the sense that the various places describing the experiencer's and, by implication, its own situatedness (*Befindlichkeit*), the mandala, the palatial mansion, the citadel, and the temple, are its own creations.

A summary term for these diverse closures is '*Og-min*,⁵⁰ about which Padmasambhava has this to say:⁵¹

(In) a place [called] '*Og-min*, the vortex of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts and meanings, the wide-open sky-(like) dimensionality (and) field-like expanse of the all-ground [that doubles as Being-as-wholeness and our ontic foundation], [thinking's thinking as] a palatial mansion, (the whole's) dimensionality as a place pure (and symbolically challenging for its observer), a house in which are gathered into a unity various (intensities of light that constitute) its preciousness,...

It will have been noted that the prominence given to the place (*gnas*) primarily serves to highlight the experiencer's situatedness (*Befindlichkeit*) in a certain, already preexistent context and his *Zugehörigkeit*, his being attuned to this context.⁵² It is this *Zugehörigkeit* that from the

perspective of the experiencer decides whether his *Befindlichkeit* is experienced as one that is the immensity of a life-enhancing dimensionality called 'Og-min or whether it is experienced as a frightening dimensionality, a gloomy and sinister landscape called *dur-khrod* that, in particular, is both "imaginal" and "realistic" in the sense of a "burial/cremation ground." Essentially this place marks the unfolding of an "intelligence" that is both a transcendently glorious goodness (*dpal kun-tu-bzang-po*) and an utterly sublime exuberance (*che-mchog he-ru-ka*) that may well be frightening to its experiencer who stubbornly refuses to grow into his authentic Self.

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NOTES

1. On this new term see Globus (1987, pp. 373-385, p. 374 *et passim*). Also compare with this new term Hesiod's (circa 800 B.C.E.) idea of *chaos* and its revival in modern thought. As Ralph Abraham (1994) has pointed out: "...*chaos* does not mean disorder... It represents an abstract cosmic principle referring to the source of all creation" (p. 2).

2. See, for example, C. G. Jung (1972), p. 3.

3. *Nyi-zla bkod-pa*, 1: 129b:

dkyil ni snying-po'i klong yin-no
'khor ni ka-dag skye-med yin
dkyil ni ye-nas gzhi yin-te
'khor ni snang-srid 'khor-'das yin
dkyil ni chos-kyi dbyings yin-te
'khor ni gsal-dag 'od-gsal yin

4. Cassirer, (1955, Vol. 3, p. 202) and explained by Krois (1987): "Symbolic pregnance does not involve or depend upon the giving of signs (*Zeichengebung*) or a giving of meaning (*Sinngebung*). It is not a subjective activity, but the condition of the possibility of all *Sinngebung* und *Zeichengebung*" (p. 54).

5. *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 129a:

dkyil-'khor gzhan-nas mi-bri sems-la rdzogs
sa-tshon dkyil-'khor 'dus-byas yin
'dus-byas dkyil-'khor thams-cad 'jig
de-phyir rang-byung sems-kyi dkyil-'khor ni
rang-bzhin ngo-bo thugs-rje gsum
thog-ma dang-po'i dkyil-'khor yin

It is important to note that this interpretation reflects that phase in Padmasambhava's thinking which he had called his *yang-ti* experience—light's sheer intensity of which sun and moon are symbols that come closest to the energy in this light. In the same work, on fol. 128b, he speaks of his *yang-ti* experience and teaching as "the energy in sun and moon" (*yang-ti nyi-zla'i snying-po*).

6. Although the term *sams* (Sanskrit *citta*) is usually translated by "mind," this translation is rather inexact (as is our "mind" as well). Specifically, in Buddhist rDzogs-chen (holistic) thinking, *sams* refers to what in phenomenological thinking we would call an individual's "ontic foundation." Because of this term's psychological implication, I have rendered it *faute de mieux*, as "psyche."

7. Thus in one and the same work we find the combination *skye-med snying-po* (*Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 43a) and *snying-po skye-ba-med-pa* (ibid.: 22b).

8. *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 35a; *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 299a.

9. This German word admirably brings out the importance of *listening* (*hören*), *listening to*

(zu-hören), and the experiencer's situatedness in the act of listening. See also David Levin's (1989) profound study, *The Listening Self*.

10. By speaking of Being's (the whole's, the holon's) energy as sonorous-radiant, I attempt to bring out this energy's dual character of being radiant (visibly experienced as "light") and being sonorous (audibly experienced as "sound"). The Tibetan term *zer* means both a "ray of light" and "speaking."
11. The followers of the "new" (*gsar-ma*) tradition, in their eagerness to be more Indian than the Indians themselves, relegated experience in the sense of an *Erleben* to a minimum and emphasized a logical-literalistic-reductionistic approach to the problem of what is a human being. To give one example. Padma dkar-po (1527-1592), one of the most learned scholars of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud school, explicates the term *evam* as follows in his *Jo-bo Naropa'i khyad-chos bsre-'pho'i gzhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 58b:

A yig stong-pa-nyid rtogs-par byed-pa-la bdun-pa'i mtha'-can-gyi rnam-bye byin-pas E yig-tu 'gyur-ro/ de'i phyir E zhes-pa'i ming-gis thams-cad-kyi gzhi nam-mkha'i kham sam rnam-pa thams-cad-pa'i stong-pa-nyid-kyi mtshan-nyid-can shes-rab brjod-do/ Vam yig-gis mchog-tu mi-'gyur-ba'i bde-ba-chen-po snying-rje mtshan-nyid-can-gyi thabs brjod-de/ shes-rab ji-lta-bar thabs kyang de-lta-ba dang/ thabs ji-lta-bas shes-rab kyang de-lta-bas yang-dag-par sbyor-bas Evam mo

By adding the locative ending to the phoneme *a* that expresses (one's) understanding of "nothingness," it turns into the phoneme *e*. Therefore this *e* is said to be "the ground of everything," "the matter-dimension of (the whole's) sky-like spatiality, functioning as a nothingness that has everything," [in other words,] the principle of discriminative appreciation." The phoneme *vam* is said to [refer to] the supreme and invariant (feeling of) bliss, [in other words,] the effectiveness principle (whose) function is compassion. To the extent that the appreciation principle is commensurate with the effectiveness principle, and to the extent that the effectiveness principle is commensurate with the appreciation principle, their complete linkage is expressed by the phoneme *evam*.

12. *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 18b; *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 204a.
13. Levin (1989) aptly states: "Communication requires more than the successful performance of speech-acts; it requires, among other things, the capacity to be touched and moved by what one sees, and the capacity to listen carefully and with an open mind" (p. 102). Also: "There is more to communication than language. There is more to language than its cognitive-instrumental content" (p. 195).
14. *lTa-ba la-shan-chen-po*, 1: 110b:
rtogs-p'i gdeng-ldan 'khor-bar 'khrul mi-srid
15. *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 277b; *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 335b.
16. *Thugs-kyi yang-snying*, 2: 343b.
17. *gTer-snying*, 2: 315b.
18. The term *rang-bzhin* is one of the most difficult concepts in Buddhist thinking.

Literally translated, it indicates the whole's eigen-state, its own most unique (*rang*) ability-to-be (*bzhin*). This concept is similar to Heidegger's *Dasein* in the light of the latter's statement in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1988): "...the Dasein, as existent, is itself an intrinsically understanding entity" (p. 277).

19. *Nyi-zla bkod-pa*, 1: 105a:
brda'-yi sgo-nas rtogs-thabs bstan
20. A detailed assessment of Padmasambhava's use of allegories and symbols is presented in Guenther's (1996), *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*.
21. *thog-ma'i spyi-gzhi*. See Padmasambhava's *Kun-tu-bzang-mo klong-gsal 'bar-ba'i nyi-ma*, 25: 344b. Padmasambhava's ideas as laid down in this work have been elaborated by Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa in his *mKha'-snying*, Vol. 1, pp. 341f. on the basis of works that seem to have been composed after the time of Padmasambhava by unknown or little known authors who were familiar with Padmasambhava's ideas.
22. *sKu-gsung-thugs-rdo-rje*, 25: 56a:
ngo-bo gzhi yin dngos-po min
23. *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 280a:
gnas-lugs mnyam-nyid spyi-sa-nas
sangs-rgyas sems-can gzhi gcig-las
'khor-'das gnyis-su snang-ba mchi
24. *Ibid.*:
spyi-gzhi gnas-lugs ga-bur 'dra
sman-dug gar yang rgya-ma-chad
gnyis-ka ga-bur spyi-sar gcig
rkyen dang gang 'phrad gnyis-su snang
spyi-gzhi'i ming-med spyi-sa-na
'khor-'das gang-du rgya-ma-chad
rkyen-gyis 'char-sgo 'khrul-sgor snang
25. *sKu-gsung-thugs-rdo-rje*, 25: 56a:
spyi-gzhi'i snying-po spyi-sa yin
gnas-lugs chen-mo ci-yang med
26. *sKu-gsung-thugs-rdo-rje*, 25: 56b:
spyi-gzhi gnas-lugs snying-po-la
gtan-la 'babs-byed gzhi-yis dbab
27. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968): "Each field is a dimensionality and Being is dimensionality itself" (p. 227).
28. Martin Heidegger (1988), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: "There is no break implied in the concept and essential nature of "from something to something," it is, instead, a stretching out that is closed within itself" (p. 242).
29. *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 123a:
mkha'-klong rnam-dag gnas-lugs klong-dkyil-nas
ma-'gags od-gsal rtsal-rnams shar
gzhi-rlung nga-yi rtsal-du shar
'od-gsal nga-yi rol-pa'i rtsal

30. The Tibetan term *rol-pa*, corresponding to the Sanskrit word *līlā*, suggests gaiety, levity, amorous playfulness; in brief, joyous movement.
31. *Nyi-zla 'od-bar*, 1: 123b:
mkha'-klong rnam-dag chos-dbyings snying-po-ru
gzhi-rlung 'od-lnga snying-po'i klong-du thim
rtsal-lnga zer-lnga snying-po'i klong-du grol
stong-gsal 'od-'bar snying-po'i klong-du grol
shes-rig dran-pa snying-po'i klong-du grol
32. *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 341b:
mkha'-dbyings 'od-gsal klong-chen-du
rang-byung rtсал-zer yan-lag ma-lus spungs
33. On these technical terms see also p. 53 of the present study.
34. The important difference between *ka-dag* and *rnam-par dag-pa* is well expressed by Padmasambhava in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 8a:
ka-dag-pa'i ye-shes yin-te / dri-ma mi-gnas-pas rnam-par dag-pa'o
- Because of (wholeness) being of symbolic pregance (it is experienceable by its) originary awareness mode; because no impurity abides (in it) it is observably pure.
35. *sNang-gsal spu-gri 'bar-ba*, 2: 291a:
rang-byung rtсал-gyi yan-lag zer g.yos-pas
mdo-ru bsдus-na yan-lag lnga-bo 'di byung-bas
lnga-bo-dag-las phyi-nang snod-bcud 'khrul
rig-pa ma-'gags 'byung-ba rnam-lngar 'khrul
36. On the exact meaning of the Tibetan term see Herbert Guenther, *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, p. 68 n. 66.
37. See pp. 52-53 of the present study.
38. *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 277b:
ma-bris-pa'i dkyil-'khor 'od kha-dog sna-tshogs 'bar-bar rang-byung-ba
39. *bCud-kyi yang-snying*, 2: 26a:
ma-bris-pa'i dkyil-'khor mtha'-dbus-med-pa'i gnas
40. A detailed study of this dictum has been offered by Dietrich Mahnke (1937). See also Marie-Louise von Franz (1974, p. 178; 1992 pp. 276ff.).
41. *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 322b:
bsam-gyis mi-khyab-pa'i dkyil-'khor sgrib-pa med-par rang-bzhin-gyis 'od-gsal-ba

The term *bsam-gyis mi-khyab-pa* is synonymous with *blo-las 'das-pa* “beyond reason (or the intellect).” The low esteem in which Padmasambhava held rational cognition because of its impoverishing and narrowing down of reality, while extolling thinking’s thinking (*sems-nyid*), more or less synonymous with what was called *rig-pa* “a supraconscious ecstatic intensity” that functions through originary awareness modes (*ye-shes*), is echoed by Martin Heidegger (1977) in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*: “Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff-necked adversary of thought” (p. 112).

42. *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 277b:

ma-brtsegs-pa'i gzhal-yas khang ye-shes-kyi 'od-zer 'phro-ba

43. In view of the fact that this mansion is beyond measurability, the association of intuition with infinity as suggested by Rucker (1987): "Intuition means getting some deep sense of reality as a whole. Viewing the world as a single, mysterious whole leads quite readily to the formation of the concept of infinity gains added significance" (p. 20).

44. *bCud-kyi yang-snying*, 2: 266a:

rin-po-che 'od sna-tshogs kun-tu 'bar-ba'i gzhal-yas khang

45. *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 287b:

rin-po-che sna-tshogs gcig-tu 'dus-pa'i khang

Separated by one appositional phrase and preceding this statement is found another determination of Being's "place" (*gnas*). It runs as follows:

kun-gzhi'i mkha'-dbyings yangs-pa sems-kyi gzhal-yas khang

The wide-open sky-(like) dimensionality (and) field-like expanse of the all-ground [that doubles as Being-as-wholeness and our ontic foundation] is [thinking's thinking as] our overall psychic background [as] a palatial mansion,...

From a linguistic point of view and the character of the Tibetan language, the so-called genitive particle 'i, affixed to *kun-gzhi* and *kyi*, affixed to *sems* in this phrase and usually rendered in English by the possessive particle *of*, has nothing of the latter's objectification about it; it merely indicates an intimate relationship. Furthermore, we have to keep in mind the tendency of Tibetan writers to shorten (polysyllabic) expressions to their barest minimum. This becomes extremely hazardous for us when we have to deal with terms such as *sems* and/or *sems-nyid*. Which is it to be: *sems* or *sems-nyid*? In the translation of this tricky line I have tried to bring out this ambiguity of meaning.

46. *sPyi-gnad skyon-sel*, 2: 313a:

mkha'-dbyings kun-gzhi pho-brang-na

chos-nyid dkyil-'khor rnam-dag 'od-gsal-na

Strictly speaking, these two lines are untranslatable into any Western language with its logically developed and syntactically constructed sentences that are unable to capture the sequence of images as they occur in the immediacy of their experience. Leaving out any and all "connectives," these lines might "read" and look like:

In (a) citadel ↔ (the) sky-dimensionality /field-expanse ↔ (the) all-ground,

In a radiant light ↔ (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings ↔

(a) mandala, pure (in its presence for us as its observers).

While, furthermore, the first line may be conceived of as referring to the "outer" world (the cosmic dimension), the second line may be said to refer to the "inner" world (the anthropic dimension). But what does "outer" and "inner" mean within the *experiencing* process? We are almost immediately reminded of Novalis's insight:

Das Äußre ist ein in einen geheimen Zustand erhobnes Innre (vielleicht auch umgekehrt)

The external is the internal raised to the level of a mystery (maybe it's also the other way round).

47. *gTer-snying*, 2: 315b-316a:

*rang-bzhin-gyis rnam-par dag-pa'i gnas kun-gzhi'i pho-brang /kun-gzhi
sems-nyid khyab-brdal chen-po'i dkyil / 'od-gsal 'gag-pa-med-pa'i klong /
rin-po-che rtsal-zer kun-'byung-gi mkha' / sgrib- pa med-par 'od-gsal-ba /
de-nyid rnam-par dag-pa / rgya-chad phyogs-lhung med-pa'i gnas de*

See also above note 45 for the difficulty in translating this “procession of images” without fragmenting its unitary flow.

48. *kun-'byung*. This term is formed like *kun-gzhi* and the many other words in which *kun* is the first element in a compound, always indicating that a *holon*, a whole, is understood. In particular, *kun-'byung* refers to an individual's wholeness in its emotional and karmic manifestation. This does not contradict the idea that we humans are luminous beings: we are luminous beings on a reduced scale of luminous intensity.

49. *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 323a:

*rin-po-che'i gnas-kyi klong / chos-nyid-kyi dbyings/ 'od-gsal-gyi mkha' /
rang-byung-gi gnas / kun-gzhi'i pho-brang / 'od-gsal rnam-dag / bsam-gyis
mi-khyab-pa'i dkyil-'khor sgrib-pa med-par rang-bzhin-gyis 'od-gsal-ba /
rgya gar-yang ma-chad-pa / phyogs gang-du yang ma-lhung-ba / mtha' gar-
yang ma-reg-pa / rin-po-che rnam-dag 'od-gsal / ngang-dangs rang-gsal-gyi
lha-khang-na*

The frequency with which the image of light is used, is particularly instructive and quite literally highlights this place to have been an *Erleben* that its experiencer struggles to express in words.

50. In Sanskrit texts this place is known as Akanistha. It is the highest level in the realm of aesthetic color patterns (*rupa*). I have intentionally avoided the Sanskrit term because of its concretistic connotations. For Padmamsambhava and the later holistic (rDzogs-chen) thinkers like Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po and g.Yung-ston rdo-rje dpal bzang-po, 'Og-min is, from the perspective of its “location,” a purely imaginal realm, and from the perspective of the experiencer, it is the experiencer's auto-excitability (*rang-rig*), a supraconscious ecstatic intensity that is the whole's (and nobody else's) excitability/excitation.

51. *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 287b:

*'Og-min-gyi gnas / chos-nyid-kyi klong / kun-gzhi'i mkha'-dbyings yangs-
pa / sems-kyi gzhal-yas- khang / dbyings rnam-par-dag-pa'i gnas / rin-po-
che sna-thogs gcig-tu 'dus-pa'i khang*

52. On the meaning of this German word, see p. 55.



V. V. Nalimov, detail of painting by V. S. Gribkov

*I wanted to look through the open window,
behind the window of the whole Universe,
and that very Universe to grasp.*

—V. V. Nalimov (17 January 1997)