

HERBERT GUENTHER

THE TEACHINGS OF  
PADMASAMBHAVA



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# THE TEACHINGS OF PADMASAMBHAVA

BY

HERBERT GUENTHER



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*To*  
*Edith and Michael*  
*in gratitude*



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## PREFACE

Although in the Indo-Tibetan cultural area and among those who study it the name Padmasambhava has become a household word, little is known about this enigmatic person who goes by this cryptonym, and still less about his ideas. His so-called biographies, more properly termed hagiographies, are late compositions, centuries removed from his time, as is evident from the language in which they are written, and are concerned with the miraculous feats of their hero, rather than with his visions and ideas. As expressions of a person's inner life, these are a matter of psychology and philosophy in which, in addition to linguistics and literary forms, I personally am particularly interested.

My fascination with the unknown (not necessarily, the obscure and occult) goes back to my student days when first I came across pictorial representations of Padmasambhava whose very physiognomy was so different from other Tibetan portrait paintings and statues. But when I tried to learn something about his visions and ideas, I drew a blank. There simply was no original source material available. Another aggravating circumstance was the general intellectual-academic climate that was more or less averse to the literary genre that goes by its Indian name of Tantra—literally, this word means a “loom” and, figuratively, “a weaving of one's life” (which involves the whole person). This climate did not, nor does it today, care much for spiritual realities pertaining to a higher level than the one that can be perceived by a merely rational approach. By aiming at a detached view, this approach bases itself on the metaphysical assumption that what does not fit into its narrow frame is not of great relevance. As a consequence, this arrogant assumption has had devastating effects in the cultural sphere and, in the field of Indo-Tibetan studies, has led to the neglect of indigenous Tibetan contributions. Texts of which no Sanskrit sources were available and could be consulted, were dismissed as not worth an in-depth study.

My hope to find out more about Padmasambhava's ideas and visions was shattered when I went to and spent many years in India

where under the auspices of the Indian Government I initiated Tibetan studies in their own right at the Varanaseya Sanskrit University, and attracted learned Tibetans, irrespective of their doctrinal affiliations. Although because of my impartiality all of them were most eager to share what they knew with me, whenever I tried to find out something about Padmasambhava's ideas, I drew a blank. "He was a great man, a second Buddha (*sangs-rgyas gnyis-pa*), a precious guru (*guru rin-po-che*)" was all they could tell me. Of his own works they did not know anything and, as a matter of fact, very few among these learned Tibetans would honestly admit that they no longer understood the old language.

The situation changed drastically when I acquired a complete set of the *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*—still one of the best collections of the "older" (*rnying-ma*) texts of Buddhism, among which Padmasambhava's own works (as attested to by his interpreter-translator-editor, the *lotsava* sKa-ba-dpal-brtsegs) figure prominently. Finally I could implement Edmund Husserl's call *Zurück zu den Dingen* ("back to basics").

A detailed study of Padmasambhava's writings opened up an incredible wealth of ideas and psychological insights on his part. They confirmed me in my contention that the works in which these images and the insights they express figure so prominently, are genuinely phenomenological reports of experiences that tend to become distorted the moment they are mistaken for truth-claims. By their very nature of being mere claims, they are spurious and ephemeral postulates in misplaced concreteness. The symbols or archetypal images through which the deeply moving insights of the experiencer present themselves and the allegories into which they are woven to form a kind of narrative, have an enduring appeal because they speak directly to our innermost being. However, the poetic charm of the original imagery is unfortunately lost in any translation into any Western language because Western languages, based on Aristotelian categories, are so totally different from the Tibetan language. Nonetheless, as far as possible I have tried to preserve the original diction, and in order to give the reader a visual and, mediately, auditive impression I have added the original Tibetan version to the translated passages. Very few libraries and/or private persons own Tibetan collections.

I hope the reader will be as much impressed by the largely neglected visionary thinker Padmasambhava as I have been over the many years I devoted to the study of his writings in India and here in Canada.

### *Acknowledgements*

Although the phenomenological-hermeneutical approach to the subject matter of this book is entirely my own, I would be remiss in not acknowledging the help I received from friends and colleagues. David Michael Levin introduced me to phenomenology and encouraged me in pursuing this approach by making valuable suggestions. Stanley Krippner rekindled my interest in the kind of psychology that had not yet banished the psyche from its repertoire, and encouraged and helped me formulate a terminology more appropriate to Padmasambhava's psychological insights. Allan Combs prodded me toward a deeper understanding of process oriented thinking that underlies much of Buddhist thinking with its insistence on experience rather than on impoverishing logical reductionism. In this context I also must express my gratitude to Sonam T. Kazi who is one of the few persons who still know the older Tibetan language and its vocabulary that is not to be found in any of the standard dictionaries.

I am especially grateful to my former students and friends, Jeanette Lavigne and Mariana Neves, for carefully reading the whole manuscript. Their continual questions forced me to clarify certain points (which I deemed to be self-evident).

But above all, my thanks go to my daughter Edith and her husband Michael Kimbell for their literary and editorial skill, and, last but not least, to my wife Ilse for her patience and for her unflagging zeal in checking the translation with the original Tibetan text and preparing the indices.



## INTRODUCTION

Who was (or is) Padmasambhava? The answer to this question, as to many others, remains unresolved. Apart from the legends that have accrued around Padmasambhava, as they tend to around other unusual personalities, he has to this day remained as much an enigma as he must have been when he captured the respect of the culturally ambitious Tibetans in the eighth century. Equally enigmatic is the rich world of his ideas which defies any facile (and fashionable) reductionism to Indian rationalistic, causal-mechanistic thought and belief systems.

While the historicity of the person who goes by the name of Padmasambhava is beyond doubt, and while there also is no reason to doubt the tradition that he was not an Indian, but a “foreigner” who hailed from Urgyan, famous for its magicians, stayed for some time at the court of king Khri-srong lde’u-btsan (742–74(?) C.E.) in connection with the construction and inauguration of the famous bSam-yas college-monastery, and then, after years of travelling all over Tibet, left (or was forced to leave) the country under mysterious circumstances, everything else about him has slipped into obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> sTag-tshang rdzong-pa dPal-sbyor bzang-po states in his *rGya-bod yig-tshang* (composed 1434), pp. 186f., that Padmasambhava stayed in Tibet fifty-four years and, during this time, converted all the gods (*lha*) and noxious demons (*klu*) to Buddhism, turned many stretches of the wild country and its mountainous terrains into habitable areas, and concealed innumerable treasures of a spiritual and material nature. The prolific dGe-lugs-pa scholar Sum-pa mkhan-chen Ye-shes dpal’byor (1704–1788) even goes so far as to claim that there had been two Padmasambhavas: “a ‘true’ Padmasambhava who had spent a long time in Tibet subduing all the local gods and demons, and a ‘false’ Padmasambhava who was just a Nepalese medium and only stayed a short while in Tibet” (R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 66). All the incidents in the life of Padmasambhava, be they actual reminiscences or pious inventions, can be traced back to the *gter-ma* (“hidden treasures”) tradition that began with Sangs-rgyas bla-ma (ca. 1000–1080) and, in the specific case of Padmasambhava, started with Nyang-ral nyi-ma ’od-zer (1124–1192), the “discoverer” of the *Slob-dpon Padma’byung-gnas-kyi skyes-rabs chos’byung nor-bu’i phreng-ba rnam-thar zangs-gling-ma* (of which several versions exist), and continued through a long line of “discoverers of hidden texts” (*gter-ston*) of whom the more important ones are (1) Chos-kyi dbang-phyug (1212–1270), the “discoverer” of the *bKa’-thang sde-lnga*—the discovery occurred in 1231—of which the third section from among the five sections, the *bTsun-*

Even his name Padmasambhava (*Padma 'byung-gnas* in Tibetan) "He whose origin is a lotus" is not a proper name in the strict sense of the word, but an epithet with symbolic significance. One such symbolic indication is related to the observable fact that a lotus grows from the mud in water, without being soiled by it, a circum-

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*mo'i bka'i thang-yig*, is the most significant one because it contains old material, though no linguistic archaisms, and (2) Urgyan (or Orgyan) *gling-pa* (1323 or 1329–ca. 1360 or 1367), the discoverer of the *U-rgyan guru Padma-'byung-gnas-kyi skyes-rabs rnam-par thar-pa rgyas-par bkod-pa* in 1346. This text is better known by its short title of *Padma bka'-thang* of which an excellent edition was published by the Si-khron mi-rigs (Minorities) Publishing House (China) in 1987.

From a historical point of view these "rediscovered" texts are of little relevance: there are too many discrepancies, if not to say, blatant contradictions in one and the same text or the texts ascribed to one and the same author, concerning what we know to be historical facts. But from a literary point of view these "rediscovered" texts are of enormous importance. Written in verse form in the language as spoken by the "discoverer" at the time of their discovery, these texts reflect the *Zeitgeist* that demanded that everything had to be "Indian" and, therefore, as tendentious writings, they increasingly marginalize Padmasambhava's "foreign" (Urgyan, also spelled Orgyan) and even Tibetan connection. Thus, Padmasambhava's consort, mKhar-chen-bza' Ye-shes 'tsho-rgyal (also spelled mtsho-rgyal), originally one of king Khri-srong lde'u-btsan's five wives, requested by Padmasambhava and given to him by the king "for services rendered," is completely overshadowed by the princess Mandārāvā, daughter of the king of Zahor (somewhere situated between Nepal and Assam). It is this last mentioned text that makes Padmasambhava a callous murderer in Urgyan and shows him to have had an inordinate interest in young girls. Thus, of the two generally recognized consorts of Padmasambhava, mKhar-chen-bza' Ye-shes 'tsho-rgyal was about twelve years of age when Padmasambhava first met her, and the princess (*lha-lcam*) Mandārāvā was thirteen years of age when he got involved with her. In an episode, recorded in the *bTsun-mo bka'i thang* (Paro edition 1976, p. 551; Berthold Laufer, *Der Roman einer tibetischen Königin*, text and translation, Leipzig 1911, pp. 82 and 190), Padmasambhava is reported to have said when the king and his Bon queen Tshe-spong-bza' dmar-rgyan offered him their young and beautiful daughter Khrom-pa rgyan, as a reward for having cured the queen of leprosy:

*lha-lcam Khrom-pa rgyan-la dgongs-pa mdzad  
phyi yul bzang-la nang sems dag-pas [Laufer, dge-bas] snang  
'gro-ba'i don mdzad sems-can mthun-par bya  
rabs-chad ma-ning bya-ba'i ngag bcad phyir  
gurus khab-tu bzhes-par zhal-gyis bzhes*

I have thought about the princess Khrom-pa rgyan;  
Physically she is beautiful and mentally she is (still) innocent.  
Acting on behalf of the living beings she will make them live in harmony.  
In order to put an end to the rumor that my line will die out (because) I am impotent,  
I, the guru, promise to take her to be my wife.

As the story goes, he had two sons from her, the one was a no-good and died young, the other was precocious, but failed to establish a "lineage."

It is therefore very likely that these "rediscovered" texts are compositions in the manner of historical fiction by the respective discoverers.

stance that lends itself admirably to express the idea of a human being's living in the world without being polluted by its vicissitudes. In poetic diction this fact and sentiment has been expressed in the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*:<sup>2</sup>

May I live in all worldly walks of life free from  
Karmic blunderings, emotional entanglements, and the errors into  
which Mara would lead me:  
Like a lotus, unsoiled by water,  
Like sun and moon, not stuck in the sky.

This crypronym, which, if we are to believe tradition, replaced the earlier cryponyms "Saroruha" and "Saroruhavajra" (*mtsho-khrungs* and *mtsho-skyes rdo-rje*, respectively),<sup>3</sup> as well as the scanty data about Padmasambhava's life as a real person, already suffice to place him firmly in the main stream of the tradition of the magi.<sup>4</sup> This tradition consists of exceptional personages, visionaries and mystics whose paramount duty was to ensure the welfare of the society to which they belonged, even if they as forward-looking persons were reviled, persecuted, and killed, given the opportunity, by the backward-looking traditionalists and conformists.

The mystery that surrounds Padmasambhava is compounded by the vagueness concerning the location of his homeland, Uryyan. Where is Uryyan (also spelled Orgyan) or Uḍḍiyāna, in its Indianized (Sanskritized) form, located? The answer may depend on another mysterious person who also is said to hail from this country. This person is dGa'-rab-rdo-rje who figures prominently in the early

<sup>2</sup> *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, chapter 56, stanza 20:

*karmatu kleśatu mārāpathāto  
lokagaṭiṣu vimukto careyam  
padma yathā salilena aliptaḥ  
sūrya śaśi gaganeva asaktaḥ*

<sup>3</sup> The Tibetan term *mtsho-skyes* is a mechanical rendering of the Sanskrit term *saroruha* "growing from a lake." The Sanskrit term is itself ambiguous, it may mean "water lily" and/or "lotus." As Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers*, p. 11 n. 25 points out, "there are two main types of 'lotus' the Indian or Buddhist lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*, an edible plant), indigenous to China although it had reached Egypt from India at about the time of the Persian conquest (c. 708 B.C.), and the Egyptian lotus (*Nymphaea sp.*), a type of waterlily." If we take *saroruha* as meaning "water lily," this could be construed as a further evidence for Uryyan being part of Iran and the Middle Near East. See also below note 6. Lastly, letting the unambiguous term *padma* take the place of the ambiguous *saroruha* may well be seen as an attempt to marginalize Padmasambhava's Uryyan connection. See also below note 13.

<sup>4</sup> See, in particular, E. M. Butler, *The Myth of the Magus*.

phase of Tibetan Buddhism and whose biography is a conflation of the salient features of the Moses and Jesus legends.<sup>5</sup> This firm tradition about this person and his homeland unquestionably places Urgyan in the Middle Near East. But should a sceptic doubt any or all tradition, he might be confronted with the incontestable fact that some of the prototypes of Tibetan agricultural techniques also point to the Middle Near East and the Iranian lands extending into Turkestan and Central Asia (an area not always the desert that it is now). This makes Urgyan the name for a vast, but vaguely defined and definable, region in which by the time of Padmasambhava Christian, Gnostic, and Manichaeian ideas were very much alive.<sup>6</sup>

Although Pamasambhava grew up in an intellectually-spiritually fertile climate, as evinced in what I shall call "his own writings," the political scene was far from peaceful or reassuring. In the seventh century the Sassanian dynasty collapsed under the onslaught of the Arabs who soon occupied the homes of the Tokharians and Sogdians, highly cultured people who had controlled the silk route along which goods and ideas passed from the West to the East and from the East to the West. This led to an enormous wave of refugees that swept across Central Asia and Tibet, which itself, soon after Khri-srong lde'u-btsan (742-74(?) C.E.), became embroiled with its neighbors. It is therefore quite likely that Padmasambhava himself was one of the many refugees to seek and find asylum in Tibet. Because of his intellectual and practical acumen,<sup>7</sup> he was to rise high

<sup>5</sup> For further details see Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa, *sNying-thig ya-bzhi: Bi-ma snying-thig*, vol. 9, pp. 89ff.; Herbert Guenther, *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained*, p. 26 n. 58. For Padmasambhava in particular, dGa'-rab-rdo-rje is an "emanation of the spirit" (*thugs-kyi sprul-pa*) of the Initial Teacher Uni-trinity (*ye-thog ye-gnas-kyi ston-pa gsum*). See his *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 287b. Despite the profound differences in the idea about the Initial Teacher Uni-trinity this "mystery" suggests that Padmasambhava was well aware of the Gnostic schools of thought, the Sethian and the Valentinian, who dealt with an Initial Triad and the theogonic generation.

<sup>6</sup> The identification of Urgyan with the Swat valley (now in Pakistan), first proposed by E. A. Cunningham and then repeated by Giuseppe Tucci and subsequent scholars in the academic establishment is groundless. It was based on insufficient knowledge and on the fixed idea that everything Buddhist had to be located in the sphere of interest of British colonialism. Politics is never a reliable source of information!

<sup>7</sup> In the *sKu-gsung-thugs rdo-rje rtsa-ba thams-cad rdzogs-pa'i rgyud*, in all likelihood an apocryphal work translated by a certain *dge-slong* (monk) with the name Nam-mkha'i snying-po, on fol. 69a (in the sDe-dge ed. vol. 25, fols. 55b-73b), Padmasambhava is said to have declared:

*gsang-sngags 'bras-bu 'di*  
*lta spyod gnyis-su shes-par gyis*

Know mysticism, the fruition (of all spiritual endeavors),

and be called the “eminent tutor/instructor” (*slob-dpon chen-po*) from Urgyan<sup>8</sup> or the “wise man” (*mkhas-pa*) from Urgyan.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, he also was to encounter considerable hostility.<sup>10</sup> In about 771 the king issued an edict setting up Buddhism as the official religion. His attempt to put an end to the ensuing doctrinal quarrels between the adherents of the more contemplation-oriented Chinese and the more disputation-oriented Indian teachings, by opting for the Indian form of Buddhism, had as the first tangible result the expulsion of the Chinese representatives. In the wake of a growing anti-foreign sentiment and an increasing ideological intolerance, Padmasambhava, too, as a foreigner fell victim to this movement and, in modern diplomatic jargon, became a *persona non grata*. Thus, while he may have been forced to leave Tibet or to go into hiding—he is not heard of for many centuries—he continued to exist there as a living myth.

I have spoken of Padmasambhava’s “own writings.” But here we encounter another enigma. None of his works are ever quoted, not even by Tibetan authors who otherwise are full of praise of him.<sup>11</sup> Why? Was it too dangerous in an intellectual climate in which everything had to be “Indian,” to quote a person who was not of “pure” Indian ancestry? We do not know what was the language of Urgyan or what was Padmasambhava’s mother tongue, and no text in what might have been this language has come down to us. But this much is certain: it was not classical Sanskrit<sup>12</sup> and, as a matter

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(To consist of) both vision and praxis.

In the *Padma bka'-thang*, p. 460, Nam-mkha'i snying-po is mentioned as a disciple of Padmasambhava.

<sup>8</sup> Colophon to his *sPros-pa gcod-pa sde-linga*, 2: 277a.

<sup>9</sup> Colophon to his *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 287a. How high he rose is well attested to by the fact that his foremost “disciple” Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal had been one of the wives or concubines of the king Khri-srong lde'u-btsan and had been given to him “for services rendered.”

<sup>10</sup> See for instance the account in 'Gos lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu-dpal's (1392–1481) *Deb-ther sngon-po*, translated by George N. Roerich as *The Blue Annals*, vol. 1, p. 43, and the *sBa-bzhed*, edited by R. A. Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas: sBa-bzhed*, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Thus, for instance, Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa never quotes Padmasambhava's *sPros-bral don-gsal*, but only its resumé, the *Thig-le kun-gsal*, by a certain dPal-ldan Seng-ge'i 'od-can, an Indian pandit (*rgya-gar mkhan-po*), assisted in his work by the lo-tsā-ba (“translator”) Vairocana.

<sup>12</sup> The fact that Padmasambhava's works have a Sanskrit title in addition to the Tibetan title does not mean anything. In the wake of a growing intolerance against everything non-Indian, Buddhist texts, whether they were of Indian or non-Indian origin, had to have an Indian title in order to be recognized as Buddhist texts. A closer look at these

of fact, all his hermeneutical interpretations of technical Buddhist terms start from the Tibetan rendering of the original terms without ever referring to their Sanskrit or Prakrit forms. In this context, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the early Tibetan translators of Buddhist texts *thought* about what they translated and struggled with its presentation in a medium that only too often had to comply with the rigidly circumscribed requirements of the metrical pattern into which it was cast.

Broadly speaking, Padmasambhava's writings fall into two major groups. The one group that is of special interest and relevance for the present study, reflects his exceptional vision and experience with its rich symbolism, not found anywhere else, and the abiding theme of its presentation is the question of "who we are, what we have lost, and what we are going to become." Developed in the form of a dialogue between teacher and disciple, the locale where this takes place, is, for want of a better term, a *spiritual* realm, approximating sheer transcendence. This group is the joint effort of Padmasambhava himself and his Tibetan "translator/editor" sKa-ba dpal-brtsegs.<sup>13</sup> The other group also deals with visionary experiences, but

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added Indian titles shows that they are concoctions by persons who had no knowledge of Sanskrit as a language, but whose ability to switch terms satisfied the ecclesiastical censors.

<sup>13</sup> He is one of the three great *lo-tsa-bas*, the other two being Cog-ro klu'i rgyal-mtshan and Zhang ye-shes-sde. But why is he, an expert of the Chinese language, connected with Padmasambhava and not Cog-ro klu'i rgyal-mtshan, an expert of the language and script of Urygan? Another intriguing problem is the fact that all of Padmasambhava's works that were given their final version by the "translator-editor" sKa-ba dpal-brtsegs and then submitted for approval to the king, are variously marked by injunctions such as "strictly confidential" (*bka'-rgya*), "secret" (*sbas-rgya*), "(to be kept in the) archives" (*gter-rgya*). A few, such as the *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs* (2: 287a) and the *sNang-gsal spu-gri* (2: 313a), carry the additional sentence "now is not the time to promulgate (this work)." The inevitable question of when these works would become public is answered in the colophons to the *Nyi-zla'i snying-po* (3: 46b) and the *sNang-gsal spu-gri* (2: 312b). In all likelihood, these colophons were added at the time of the compilation of the *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*, ca. the 13th and following centuries. They are thoroughly apocalyptic in tenor, but their language has nothing archaic about it. While the *Nyi-zla'i snying-po* (3: 46b) mentions only the *yongs-rdzogs bla-med theg-pa* "the altogether complete, unsurpassable pursuit," alias *yongs-rdzogs thod-rgal* "the altogether complete leap-experience," names for Padmasambhava's *spyi-ti yoga*, the *sNang-gsal spu-gri* (2: 312a) mentions both the *spyi-ti yoga* by this designation and the *sPros-gcod sde-linga* which comprises the following five works by Padmasambhava:

- 1) *sPros-gcod rtsa-ba* (2: 271b-277a)
- 2) *bCud-kyi yang-snying* (2: 266a-271b)
- 3) *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs* (2: 277b-287a)
- 4) *sNang-gsal spu-gri* (2: 287a-313a), and
- 5) *sNang-srid kha-sbyor* (2: 204a-265b).

their visionary content is more of an *imaginal*-psychological nature, a sort of an epiphany of a greater mystery. This group is more “Indian” in character and their translator-editor is Vairocana who became famous for being exiled from the court of Khri-srong lde’u-btsan for allegedly having had an affair with the queen Tshe-spong-bza’ dmar-rgyan.<sup>14</sup> It is this difference in character that may have led Sum-pa mkhan-chen Ye-shes dpal-’byor<sup>15</sup> to the assumption of there having been two Padmasambhavas.<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that

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These five works are auxiliaries to Padmasambhava’s major opus, the *sPros-bral don-gsal* (1: 1–89a). While the style and the contents of the *sNang-gsal spu-gri* make it a work by Padmasambhava, the “foreigner” from Urgyan, its authorship is attributed to the *rGya-gar-gyi guru Padmasambhava*—the only case in which even his epithet *Padma ’byung-gnas* is given in Sanskrit—obviously in order to wipe out any reference to his outlandishness.

This secrecy-mongering that surrounds this group of Padmasambhava’s writings may have been due to the fact that his ideas were too unorthodox and that, after all, as a foreigner he was an intruder in an already tense situation in which the antagonism between the various Buddhist and non-Buddhist (Bon) factions was on the increase. In course of time this secrecy-mongering became a ruse to impress others whilst hiding one’s own ignorance. This ruse together with the greed of its perpetrators was sharply, though unavailingly, criticized by rDza dPal-sprul Orgyan ’Jigs-med Chos-kyi dbang-po (1808–1878) in his *Kun-bzang zhal-lung*. It is still today practised by the diverse Rinpoches, Tulkus, and Holinesses and what-not who have come to India, Nepal and the West after the demise of the Lamaist state.

<sup>14</sup> Khri-srong lde’u-btsan had five queens: Tshe-spong-bza’ was an ardent follower of Bon and therefore cast in an unfavorable light by the Buddhists. mChims-bza’-ma is sometimes designated the principal queen, sometimes the fourth and to come from one of the oldest noble families in Tibet. Then there was mKhar-chen-bza’ Ye-shes ’tsho-rgyal whom Padmasambhava “requested” and was given him for “services rendered.” Then there were the Buddhist queens ’Bro-bza’ byang-chub sgron-ma and Pho-gyong-bza’ (also called rGyal-mo btsun). The alleged affair between Vairocana and Tshe-spong-bza’ is detailed in the *bTsun-mo bka’-thang*. It is interesting to note that the unknown author of a Padmasambhava “biography” in an ornate poetic style, the *’Chi-med mtsho-’khrungs rgyal-ba’i rtogs-pa brjod-pa ngo-mtshar rgya-mtsho’i ’jings-snam*, makes much of this affair. He does not say one word about Padmasambhava’s consort, the Tibetan Ye-shes ’tsho-rgyal, but is full of praise of his Indian (Zahor) consort Mandārāvā.

Vairocana is said to have been a disciple of Padmasambhava. In Jin-ch’uan (China) where he was exiled by the king or sent by Padmasambhava he established a “lineage” with one of the daughters of the local ruler. This group of visionary experiences centers round the images of Heruka (sheer exuberance) and the “great mother” (Ekajaṭī or Mukhale) with her handmaidens (*phyag-rgya-ma*) and host of female figures (*ma-mo*), images of cognitive processes (*vijñāna*). Padmasambhava’s influence is unmistakable.

<sup>15</sup> See above n. 1.

<sup>16</sup> It is, of course, always a bit awkward to multiply persons for no other reason than that one is unable or unwilling to admit that a person’s interests may change or that a person had several interests at one and the same time. On the basis of such unwillingness or inability one would have to say that there were two Isaac Newtons, the one the physicist and mathematician, the other the alchemist. At least Sum-pa mkhan-po’s ob-

none of the Padmasambhava-Vairocana works are marked “strictly confidential” or “secret.”<sup>17</sup>

Padmasambhava’s thinking, the unorthodoxy of which raises him high above the crowd and, for this reason, may have been considered to have been “subversive” and therefore better be kept secret, begins with experience in the sense of it being a live process that in its immediacy antedates any theorizing about it. Its dynamics is felt by the experiencer to be omnipresent both within himself and in his environing world, with which he is as yet so intertwined that as the experiencer he *is* this world just as this world as experienced *is* the experiencer. In other words, Padmasambhava’s thinking is anthropo-cosmic in a very special sense. To the extent that *Man/human* stands at the center of his vision and interest, his anthropo-cosmic way of thinking evinces similarities with Gnostic trends,<sup>18</sup> but differs from them in crucial aspects. *Man/human* is not created by a god or demiurge, but evolves out of the potential that he/she/it is and that in its dynamics expresses itself in symbols of its own making, “epiphanies of (its) mystery” (*brda*’), that are understood in the immediacy of their experiencing them prior to their shaping them in in distinct patterns of meaning and/or images (*dpe*) by the omnipresent experiencer’s consciousness. Here a word of caution is necessary: the experiencer as an ubiquitous presence is not identical or even identifiable with an individual’s ego-logical self or mind that is an emergent, secondary phenomenon within and of a larger whole that itself is irreducible to anything other than itself. To this felt dynamics Padmasambhava has given the name *snying-po*, best rendered as “sheer intensity” and/or “individuated energy” in the specific sense of being one’s core creative force, already at work before any name is given to it.<sup>19</sup> Its dynamics manifests itself through im-

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servation shows that he, though a dGe-lugs-pa for whom works not belonging to the dGe-lugs-pa tradition are taboo, had read Padmasambhava’s works. Modern Tibetans who have come to the West do not read works belonging to the “old” (*nying-ma*) tradition, neither do Western academics study works of which no Sanskrit “crib” is available.

<sup>17</sup> Could this be another instance of the growing “anti-foreigner” sentiment in Tibet?

<sup>18</sup> See Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 87, quoting Gilles Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Thus, for instance, in his *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 35a, Padmasambhava states that “this intensity/energy for which there is no name and which has no boundaries, is not a domain for the intellect’s discursiveness” (*snying-po ming-med mtha’-grol ‘di/ blo-yi spyod-yul ma-yin te*). This “intensity/energy” has much in common with what C. G.

ages and symbols carrying with them a luminous, radiant quality. As its experiencers we ourselves are *eo ipso* already luminous beings living in the immediacy of these images. These we cannot but interpret without appreciating them in terms of our being *en-worlded* and *en-natured*, which means that these images and symbols also have sensuous qualities. In other words, the immediacy of sheer experience is found nowhere else but in its experienced and experienceable images that lend themselves to contrasting interpretations, physical or mental, depending on the perspective the experiencer entertains.

In what is, as we would nowadays say, an intrapsychic dialogue, Padmasambhava lets the Teacher “Utterly free from the limitations set by the categories of rational thought” (*mu-mtha’ yongs-grol*) respond to the question by the “Little Man (who is the whole’s) self-manifesting Light” (*rang-snang khye’u-chung*) about the emergence of the whole’s functionality in its brilliance and radiance, as follows:<sup>20</sup>

The emergence of the (whole’s) functionality (from out of its source that is the whole as) radiant light (comes about as follows):

Just as from the intensity/energy in the sun

The rays of its functionality continue shining forth automatically in what is its branchings,<sup>21</sup>

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Jung has called “psychic energy” and with what the Gnostics called the “pleroma,” the fullness-nothingness or nothingness-fullness. On the meaning of *snying-po* and the use of this term by Klong-chen rab’byams-pa see also Herbert V. Guenther, *Being’s Vitalizing Core Intensity*.

<sup>20</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 21a:

*’od-gsal rtsal-gyi ’char-lugs ni*  
*dper-na nyi-ma’i snying-po-la*  
*rtsal-zer yan-lag shugs-las shar*  
*de-bzhin snying-po’i gnas-lugs-las*  
*rig-snang rtsal-zer shugs-las ’char*  
*tsan-dan gla-rtsi sgog-pa-la*  
*gang-na gnas-kyang dri dang ldan*  
*de-bzhin chos-nyid rang-bzhin yang*  
*gang-na gnas-kyang ’od dang ldan*  
*nyi-zla gar yod ’od-gsal bzhin*  
*snying-pos gar khyab rtsal-zer ’char*

<sup>21</sup> These “branchings” (*yan-lag*) form a quaternity. With functionality (*rtsal*) at the center the whole’s self-geometrization in the form of a mandala or centered four is effected. More concretely speaking, these branchings are the fundamental forces that go into the making of the individual human being’s psycho-physical complexity and deriving their *raison d’être* from the whole’s functionality-creativity, counted as a fifth fundamental force.

So also from this intensity/energy's abidingness<sup>22</sup>

The rays of its functionality burst forth automatically as (the experimenter's) awareness and the phenomenal world (of which he becomes aware).

Just as wherever sandalwood, musk, or garlic is found

There also is its scent,

So also wherever there is (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings<sup>23</sup>

There also is its light.

Just as wherever sun and moon exist there is their radiant light,

So also wherever (the whole's) intensity/energy extends there are the rays of its functionality.<sup>24</sup>

There is nothing that does not owe its existence to this intensity/energy, as Padmasambhava lets the same teacher, the symbol of wholeness, declare:<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The Tibetan technical term *gnas-lugs* comprises both Heidegger's idea of Dasein and Bergson's idea of duration (*durée*). See Herbert Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, p. 195 n. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *chos-nyid*. More will be said about this dynamic term later on.

<sup>24</sup> Lest the listener may concretize this energy into something (or other), Padmasambhava continues in a vein that would have done credit to the foremost Gnostic thinker Basilides, by saying:

*gzhi-med ngang-las kun-gzhi shar*  
*dngos-med ngang-las dngos kun shar*  
*snang-med ngang-las sna-thogs shar*  
*yod-med ngang-las 'khor-'das shar*

Out of the dimension of a ground-that-is-not the all-ground [as the individual's ontic foundation] arises;

Out of the dimension of a particular-existent-that-is-not all particular existents arise;

Out of the dimension of the invisible [the visible-that-is-not] the multiplicity of the visible arises;

Out of the dimension of the existent-that-is-not samsara and nirvana arise.

The Tibetan term *ngang*, here rendered for brevity's sake as "dimension," which is a more or less static notion, has the added connotation of "being disposed to," which is a dynamic notion.

<sup>25</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 32a:

*snying-po'i rang-bzhin skye-ba-med-pa-las*  
*rtsal-zer yan-lag rtog-pa'i yid g.yos-pas*  
*bdag-med ma-rtogs zhe-sdang dmyal-bar skyes*  
*zhe-sdang rang-grol dmyal-ba'i g.yang-sa gcad*

The rendering of the phrase *snying-po'i rang-bzhin* by "the very nature of this intensity/energy" is not quite satisfactory because of the ambiguity of the preposition *of* in the English language. In Padmasambhava's way of thinking it is not that the intensity/energy is one thing and the very nature another thing, somehow strung together. What he wants to say is that this intensity/energy's own (*rang*) most unique ability-to-be-itself (*bzhin*) is just intensity/energy.

The very nature of this intensity/energy that (though it) has no origin (manifests itself in)

The branchings (that are) the rays of its functionality, is shaken up by the ego-logical self with its fragmentizing tendencies.

Not understanding what “Non-self” means, the aversion (that the ego-logical self feels against it) becomes (its living) hell.

Through the self-dissipation of aversion [coinciding with the emergence of an originary awareness that is (as bright as) a mirror] the abyss of hell is eliminated.<sup>26</sup>

As is the case with any presentation of experience in which the presence of the experiencer is inevitable and unmistakable, elements belonging to the intellectual-spiritual trends of the period in which the experiencer lives, can easily be pinpointed. It is therefore not surprising that Gnostic (Sethian and Valentinian) as well as other ideas (Manichæan and Neo-Platonic) are found in Padma-sambhava’s writings. For this reason it is tempting to belittle him by calling him a syncretist. But to do so is to overlook the tremendous transformation that the disparate ideas have undergone by the way he welded them into a novel structure on the basis of his own vision and intuition. It is in this creative understanding that the uniqueness and sovereignty of his thinking shows itself at its best. He formulated a holistic vision that transcends the traditional division between the physical and the mental, the emotional-instinctual and the spiritual, in two related disciplines that remain experiential through and through. The one he referred to by the name of *spyi-ti* or *spyi-ti yoga* and the other by the name of *yang-ti* or *yang-ti yoga*, where the term *yoga* is understood as a “leap”—a leap aiming high (*thod-rgal*) and a leap making the one who takes it come out on top (*gong-rgal*), respectively.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The implication of this terse statement is that through “understanding” (*rtogs*) the constructs of the ego-logical self are “seen” to be its fictions in misplaced concreteness. Understanding involves a kind of irrealization, which means that the images of the whole’s functionality or creative dynamics lose the hold they have on the non-understanding (*ma-rtogs*) mind.

<sup>27</sup> In his *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 40a, he uses the term *thod-rgal* both for the *spyi-ti* and the *yang-ti* and conceives of this “leap” as building an unassailable castle for the overlord, the symbol of the Self. Thus he says:

*spyi-ti yang-ti thod-rgal-la*  
*theg-pa dgu’i dgra ’ong ste*  
*ati-nas ni nyan-thos-par*  
*grub-mtha’ mi-mthun dgu yod-pas*  
*de dgu’i rgol-ba byung-ba-na*  
*dang-po bisan-po mkhar-du brtsigs*

Let us begin with the *spyi-ti* experience. This is how Padmasambhava lets the teacher “Utterly free from the limitations set by the categories of rational thought” explicate to the “Little Man (who is the whole’s) self-manifesting Light” the term *spyi-ti yoga*:<sup>28</sup>

*spyi* means to break the frame (into which) the spiritual pursuits (have been cast),

By *ti* the core of all (of them) is exposed;

*yo* means pairing (aletheic) vision with (unpremeditated) praxis,<sup>29</sup>

By *ga* (one’s existential) authenticity is displayed at one stroke.

No less revealing is the following statement put into the mouth of the primordial “Buddha” Kun-tu bzang-po (“goodness *par excellence*”), that links this *spyi-ti* experience and teaching with the

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*de-nas mi-'jigs dpa'-bo btang*  
*de-nas sra-ba'i go-cha btsal*  
*de-nas rno-ba'i mtshon thogs-la*  
*theg dgu rtsod-pa 'dri-ba'i tshé*  
*pha-rol grub-mtha' chab-tu gzhug*  
*dpa'-bo bzhag-la bisan mkhar bsrungs*

This *spyi-ti* or *yang-ti* or *thod-rgal*

May be approached by (its) enemies who are the nine (spiritual) pursuits.

Their contradictory claims range

From the Ati(yoga-rDzogs-chen teaching) to the Śrāvaka (teaching).

When an assault by these nine (enemies) is impending

The first (thing to do) is to secure the overlord in a castle;

Then one sends forth fearless heroes;

Then one clothes oneself in a protective armor;

Then one holds in one’s hand a sharp sword and,

When the time comes to do battle with the nine enemies,

One crushes the outsiders’ belief-systems.

Positioning the heroes, one has them guard the overlord in the castle.

I have quoted this passage at length because despite its military jargon it is to be understood as an intellectual campaign. The phrase “to do battle” (*rtsod-pa 'dri-ba*) primarily means “to engage in a philosophical disputation,” and the “crushing” (*chab-tu gzhug*) means “to have the (former) enemies swear allegiance to the (new) ruler,” which was the custom at Padmasambhava’s time and continued well into modern times, not always in gentle ways as uninformed enthusiasts want us to believe.

<sup>28</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 41a:

*spyi ni theg-pa'i dbyibs phyung ste*  
*ti-yis kun-gi ti-ga ston*  
*yo ni lta-spyod zung-'brel te*  
*ga-yis rang-gnas chig-chod bstan*

<sup>29</sup> I have borrowed the term “aletheic” from David Michael Levin’s remarks on Heidegger’s use of the Greek word *aletheia* as “unconcealment” in his *The Opening of Vision*, pp. 419ff., and used it to bring out Padmasambhava’s understanding of what “vision” meant for him. Similarly, the term “unpremeditated” is meant to show that praxis is not ego-logical or behavioral (preordained correctness) in character.

(whole's) intensity/energy of which Padmasambhava has repeatedly spoken:<sup>30</sup>

*spyi* means the totality of that which exists without exception,

*ti* means (the whole's) intensity/energy becoming a vortex;<sup>31</sup>

*spyi* means (the experiencer's) spiritual excitation/excitability, ego-logical mentation, overall psychic background, and (its) divisive concepts,

*ti* means (the whole's) /intensity/energy becoming a vortex.

*yo* means the totality (of all that is) being indivisible and unpremeditated,<sup>32</sup>

*ga* means (the whole's) intensity/energy from whose vortex the giving birth to thoughts/meanings arises.

Therefore (this experience) outshines all other spiritual pursuits by its brilliance;

Therefore the *spyi-ti* experience is completeness with respect to (the experiencer's) psychic-spiritual constitutedness.<sup>33</sup>

Lastly, the following words may be adduced:<sup>34</sup>

Although in this *spyi-ti* experience, the very dimensionality of (the whole's) intensity/energy,

There does not exist any fault or virtue,

<sup>30</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 263b:

*spyi ni yod-tshad ma-lus-pa*  
*ti ni snying-po klong-du 'gyur*  
*spyi ni rig yid sems rtog ste*  
*ti ni snying-po klong-du 'gyur*  
*yo ni ma-lus dbyer-med rtsis-gdab-med*  
*ga ni snying-po chos-nyid klong-nas 'char*  
*de-phyir theg-pa thams-cad zil-gyis gnon*  
*de-phyir spyi-ti sems-la rdzogs*

<sup>31</sup> Two lines explicating the term *yoga* (split into *yo* and *ga*) are missing in all texts available to me. This shows how badly the older tradition texts (*rnying-ma*) have been transmitted.

<sup>32</sup> In today's language we would speak of this indivisibility in terms of the "interconnectedness of all that is" due to the common origin from which all that is has evolved, and of its unpremeditatedness in terms of a basic openness in the sense that the whole (in becoming a totality) determines its own dynamics and direction.

<sup>33</sup> "Psychic-spiritual constitutedness" is a make-shift rendering of the Tibetan term *sems* used here. It covers both the individual's psychic background (*sems*) and the ontological "thinking's thinking" (*sems-nyid*).

<sup>34</sup> *sGron-me brtsegs-pa*, 2: 329b:

*spyi-ti snying-po 'i ngang-nyid-la*  
*skyon dang yon-tan gnyis med kyang*  
*ma-rtogs blo-la skyon-du 'byung*

It is in (an individual's) intellect, not understanding (what is meant by wholeness), that (wholeness) is turned into (some) fault.

This poor opinion of a person's intellect reflects Padmasambhava's awareness of the fact that the intellect with its dichotomizing activity makes a person take a position opposite to reality and imposes on the latter the laws of his rational consciousness which cannot but narrow reality down and impoverish it so as to make it "conform" to its own closure and closedness. As a result, that which the (egologically closed) intellect cannot "grasp" (understand) is of little or no relevance and hence worthless (at best, a deplorable flaw or fault in the otherwise crisp, clear heights of absolute truth the intellect believes to possess).

Basically, this *spyi-ti* experience is a vision in the sense of Heidegger's unconcealment and Levin's opening. Thus Padmasambhava let the teacher "Utterly free from the limitations set by the categories of rational thought" explicate this visionary and deeply felt experience as follows:<sup>35</sup>

Vision is (wholeness in the intrinsic purity of its) symbolicalness (*ka-dag*) and (its) all-loosening-up (*kun-grol*).

(Like) the (clear) sky, the (brilliantly shining) sun and moon, a (glittering) crystal ball—

Whatever shows up in them, be it the (world's) lighting-up with (its) interpretation (as) good and evil, (as) medicine and poison,

Will, in its coming-to-presence, not cease (to be a presence), but (what wholeness) is in itself will remain the intrinsic purity of its symbolicalness (*ka-nas dag*);

So also (the whole's) intensity/energy, intrinsically pure in its symbolizing dynamics,

Is not enhanced in beauty by the five proto-structures (of our humanity)<sup>36</sup> nor is it corrupted by the five poisons (counteracting our humanity).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 35a:

*ka-dag kun-grol lta-ba'o*  
*nam-mkha' nyi-zla shel-sgong-du*  
*snang-srid bzang-ngan sman-dug gang bstan yang*  
*snang-ba ma-'gags rang-bzhin ka-nas dag*  
*de-bzhin snying-po ka-dag-la*  
*sku-Ingas ma-brgyan dug-Ingas ma-gos-so*  
*ma-rig ye-she-skyon-med ka-nas dag*

<sup>36</sup> These are according to Padmasambhava's *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 280a, the *chos-sku*, the *longs-sku*, the *sprul-sku*, the *ngo-bo'i sku* [for metrical reasons short for *ngo-bo-nyid-kyi sku*], and the *bde-chen mngon-par byang-chub-sku*. Of these, the *ngo-bo'i*

Without the blemishes of (spiritual) unknowing and of (spiritual) ordinary awareness modes (the whole's intensity/energy) remains the intrinsic purity of its symbolicalness.<sup>38</sup>

The technical terms *ka-dag* (*ka-nas dag* in its longer form) and *kun-grol*, characteristic of Padmasambhava's thinking and diction, are not actually nouns (believed to stand for things), as I have rendered them due to the fact that our language is too deeply steeped in Aristotelian categories to be able to deal with any terms that do not fall into this schema. The terms *ka-dag* and *kun-grol* are not even adjectives (qualifying nouns). Rather, they are according to the Aristotelian schema more like adverbs, vector feeling-tones that cannot be abstracted from the act of experiencing; they have *no* meaning apart from the experience itself which because of its process character is dynamic through and through. As has been noted before, Padmasambhava's thinking starts from experience as an immediate *Erlebnis*; its feeling-tone is precisely the purity of its symbolicalness in all its intensity (*ka-dag*) that, as it were, "spills over" into experience as *Erfahrung*, in which case the original and intrinsic purity and symbolicalness of the *Erlebnis*, having much in common with Ernst Cassirer's "symbolic pregnance,"<sup>39</sup> becomes a purity "looked

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*sku* is, if we may say so, of primary significance because it signifies the inseparability of the *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku*, each of them indicating an aspect of one's bodily felt (*sku*) wholeness in its being "meaning" (*chos*), "interconnectedness and interaction with others" (*longs-spyod*), and "concern for others by being a guiding image" (*sprul*). This inseparability may be conceived as a summary description of one's "objective" nature. Assigning it a preferential status, as is done by traditional philosophies, East and West, is worthless. There is also one's equally important "subjective" nature, referred to by the fifth bodily felt (*sku*) activity of the spiritual principle in its dynamics of manifesting itself as ecstatic bliss (*bde-chen*).

<sup>37</sup> These are the traditional emotional pollutants (*nyon-mongs*) of desire, aversion, dullness, jealousy, and envy.

<sup>38</sup> This line anticipates the *yang-ti* experience. Thus, in his *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 131a, Padmasambhava declares:

*ma-rig ye-sheś nram gnyis kyang*  
*rnam-rtog blo-la gnyis-srang ste*  
*yang-ti don rtogs gnyis-ka med*

Although (one may speak of a) duality of (spiritual) unknowing and (spiritual) ordinary awareness modes,

They appear as a duality for the dichotomizing intellect:

In the understanding of what *yang-ti* means, this duality does not exist.

<sup>39</sup> On this idea see Ernst Cassirer's own definition in his *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 3, p. 202, and its exegesis by John Michael Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History*, p. 54.

at” before becoming tainted by the experiencer’s representational mode of thinking about it.<sup>40</sup>

These remarks about *ka-dag* as a vector feeling-tone and adverbial character applies to the term *kun-grol* as well. What is so designated by it cannot be abstracted from the process itself; a total (*kun*) loosening-up (*grol*) by which the strictures imposed on it by the whole’s closing-in onto itself are somehow felt to fall off, like shackles, and thereby to lose their hold on the experiencer (if this term can still be used meaningfully). The culmination of this felt loosening-up and dissolution of all that which has held the experiencer in its clutches is summed up in the following statement:<sup>41</sup>

[1] The culmination of the loosening-up and dissolution of the (experiencer’s) world of phenomena

Is the attainment of the (whole’s) radiant and pure dimensionality in which meanings are born;

[2] The culmination of the loosening-up and dissolution of the (experiencer’s) cognition (of this world of phenomena)

Is the attainment of the (whole’s) No-birth ultimate symbolic pregnancy;

[3] The culmination of the loosening-up and dissolution of the (experiencer’s) mental/spiritual foundation<sup>42</sup>

Is the attainment of the (whole’s) No-thing ultimate depth and width.

The triad of the external, the internal, and the arcane is

The (above) triad of (the experiencer’s) world of phenomena, (his) cognition (of it), and (his) mental/spiritual foundation.

<sup>40</sup> In its aspect of being a “looked-at” purity this symbolicalness is termed *rnam-(par) dag-(pa)*. In other words, the difference between *ka-dag* and *rnam-dag* implies, to use our grammatical categories, a transformation of an adverb into an adjective.

<sup>41</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 22b:

*snang-ba grol-ba’i ’bras-bu ni*  
*gsal-dag zang-thal chos-dbyings ’thob*  
*rig-pa grol-ba’i ’bras-bu ni*  
*skye-med ka-dag chen-po ’thob*  
*sems-gzhi grol-ba’i ’bras-bu ni*  
*dnagos-med gting-yangs chen-po ’thob*  
*phyi dang nang dang gsang-ba gsum*  
*snang-ba rig-pa sems-gzhi gsum*  
*snang-grol rig-med skye-med grol*

<sup>42</sup> The Tibetan term *sems-gzhi*, not found anywhere else, is an extremely “compact” expression in which *sems* seems to stand for both *sems-nyid* and *sems*, usually understood as meaning *kun-gzhi* (an individual’s cognitive-spiritual background by which he or she is linked to a larger whole). Similarly *gzhi* seems to stand for the individual’s cognitive-spiritual background (*kun-gzhi*) and Being-as-such (*gzhi*).

With the loosening-up and dissolution of the world of phenomena there is no (longer any) cognition (of it, and with its nonexistence) the (experiencer's) mental/spiritual foundation dissolves (in the whole's unfathomable depth and unlimited width).

From all that has been said so far we cannot but conclude that what Padmasambhava has called the *spyi-ti* experience, a mental-spiritual "leap-that-aims-high" (*thod-rgal*), expresses his relentless search for the ultimate that no sooner than it seems to be in his grasp is challenged and rejected. Still, he has to think about it and the things of this world do intrude in this something that is nothing (or so it seems to us). It is from this limited perspective that the "Little Man (of Light) being all-excitation" (*kun-rig khye'u-chung*) asks the teacher "Lord of the Mystery" (*gsang-bdag*) the pertinent question:<sup>43</sup>

How does the meaning of (what is said to be) the whole of reality gather (and become a construct)<sup>44</sup>

In this unsurpassed *spyi-ti* that (goes by the name of) thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*)?

which the teacher answers (evasively, as we would say) by saying:<sup>45</sup>

All the entities of reality as they light up and are interpreted as *samsara* and *nirvana*

Are gathered (and become constructs) in the dimensionality of (the experiencer's) spiritual principle (*byang-chub-sems*).

The point to note here is the difference between *sems-nyid*, thinking's thinking that is not some thinking *of* or *about*, maybe not even anything we associate with what we call "thinking," and *byang-chub-sems*, the individual's "thinking" as a thrust into the direction of his spiritual refinement that acts as a guiding image about what he thinks.

<sup>43</sup> *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 286a:

*sems-nyid bla-med spyi-ti 'dir*  
*chos-kun dgongs-pa ji-ltar 'dus*

<sup>44</sup> In rendering the ambiguous term '*dus*' in this stanza in this manner I have tried to combine the idea of meanings "gathering" in their mental/spiritual premise and the idea of meanings being "constructed" by mentation.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*:

*snang-srid 'khor-'das chos-rnams kun*  
*byang-chub-sems-kyi ngang-du 'dus*

From a linguistic point of view, formed like *chos-nyid* “the (ceaseless, ‘gags-med) giving birth to thoughts/meaning” that distributes them over a *spatium* of its own making that is itself intensive, *sems-nyid* is this very intensity in the sense of it referring to the immutable (‘gyur-med) constancy that underlies the ever-changing forms this intensity may take on. This is to say that *sems-nyid* and *chos-nyid*, as “manifestations” of a primal intensity/energy (*snying-po*), highlight the principle of complementarity on which Padma-sambhava’s thinking is based. One consequence of this dynamics is that any drop in the intensity of the one “pole” has its repercussion in the other “pole.” Thus, to give an example, if the intensity in what is termed *sems-nyid* drops so that it becomes (a) *sems*, the intensity in what is termed *chos-nyid* also drops and its *spatium* is fragmented into a multiplicity of *chos*, and both reduced intensities are reified as a mind (*sems*) and its thoughts (*chos*), the domain of representational thought that henceforward has little to do with the immediacy and intensity of the primal *Erlebnis*.

However high the leap in the direction of wholeness (*thod-rgal*) by the *spyi-ti* experience may be felt to be, there still remains a faint echo of that representational thinking which the experiencer attempts to overcome, but has not yet succeeded in doing. This may be gleaned from the statement about this leap as not being such that the one who takes this leap “comes out on top” (*gong-brgal*). It may further be gleaned from the complexity of the initial situation, “the giving birth to thoughts/meanings (as a) vortex that has neither an upper nor lower termination” (*chos-nyid kha-gting med-pa’i klong*). It is here that the dialogue between the “teacher” (*ston-pa*) who is introduced as being (the center of the whole) “self-originated, utterly free from the limitations set by the categories of rational thought” (*rang-byung mu-mtha’ yongs-grol*), and his entourage (of disciples), a “luminosity that (has) lit up by itself” (*rang-snang ’od*), takes place. From out of this entourage of disciples it is the “Little Man (of Light) who is self-excited” (*rang-rig khye’u-chung*), who asks the questions and also records the teaching that is the “self-dissolution of (the whole’s) Lichtsymbolik (*gsal-dag rang-grol*) at a moment where “there is neither a beginning nor an end (*thog-mtha’ med-pa*).”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 19a. Later on the “teacher” is referred to by the term *mu-mtha’ yongs-grol*, and the one who records his teaching is called “the (whole’s) lighting-up by itself (in the shape of a) Little Man of Light” (*rang-snang khye’u-chung*). I

By contrast, the *yang-ti* experience is said to be the crown jewel of the spiritual pursuits and, since it is felt as a leap that makes the one who takes it come “out on top” (*gong-brgal*), it is likened to the neck ornament worn by the leading horse or mule in a caravan, which, as I myself have been able to witness, knows that it is the leader and, therefore also, does not allow any other animal to get ahead of it.<sup>47</sup> In this *yang-ti* experience the “teacher” (*ston-pa*) is wholeness itself, “envisioned” and “felt,” if these words are still applicable to an experience that goes far beyond what images and words can convey, as “symbolic pregnance and birthlessness” (*ka-dag skye-med*),<sup>48</sup> his entourage (*'khor*), the field-like dimension of wholeness of which He is its center and excitation, is “the brilliance of a light that was already virtually present” (*'od-gsal*), the disciple-recorder (*sdud-pa-po*) is “imaged” and “sensed” as the “preciousness of the (whole’s) *Lichtsymbolik*” (*gsal-dag rin-chen*),<sup>49</sup> and the “teaching” (*bstan-pa*) is the display of the (whole’s) No-birth (*skye-*

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have rendered the difficult technical term *gsal-dag* by the German word *Lichtsymbolik*, because the German term comes closest to what is meant by the Tibetan term: the inseparability of what, on the one hand, is a brilliance (*gsal* or *Lichthaftigkeit*) and, on the other hand, a purity (*dag* or *Symbolhaftigkeit*). Special attention should be given to the repeated use of *rang*, “self-, auto-,” emphasizing that this initial condition is “of it’s own” formulation.

<sup>47</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 127a:

*yang-ti nyi-zla'i snying-po theg-pa'i spyi-phud 'di*  
*theg-pa'i gong-brgal rdzogs-chen gnya'-cog yin*

This *yang-ti* (that is like) the intensity/energy of sun and moon, is the crown jewel of the spiritual pursuits;

Having come out on top of (all) spiritual pursuits, it is the utter completeness (of one’s spiritual life), the neck ornament (worn by the leading horse or mule in a caravan).

<sup>48</sup> This phrase is used interchangeably with *skye-med ka-dag* in Padmasambhava’s *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 122a–135a.

<sup>49</sup> Both this emphasis on light and the introduction of a disciple-recorder, literally a “gatherer,” suggest Padmasambhava’s familiarity with and indebtedness to Manichaeism, the “teaching of light,” as it was called. In this connection the statement by Mani in his *Kephalaia*, quoted by Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 335, is rather revealing:

The writings and the wisdom and the apocalypses and the parables and the psalms of all earlier churches (religions) were gathered everywhere and came to my church (religion) and were added to the wisdom which I have revealed. As water will be added to water and becomes much water, so were the ancient (earlier) books added to my writings and became a great wisdom, the like of which as not proclaimed (hitherto) in all ancient (earlier) generations. The books as I have written (them) were neither written nor revealed (hitherto).

“Familiarity with” and “indebtedness to” do not mean copying or imitating. Padmasambhava was too great and independent a thinker as to claim all the glory for himself.

*med*). Here our own language puts us behind its prison-bars, reflecting the thingness of our thought: *skye-med* does not mean that there *is* something that *has* no or *is without* birth, rather “birth” does not even exist (*med*).<sup>50</sup>

The difference between the *spyi-ti* and *yang-ti* experiences as well as their relationships to each other are extremely subtle. Padmasambhava confronts this problem and lets the disciple-recorder “Preciousness of the *Lichtsymbolik*” (*gsal-dag rin-chen*) ask the teacher “Nobirth Symbolic Pregnancy” (*skye-med ka-dag*) “What is (the relationship between) the leap that lets the person who takes it come out on top and the (leap that aims high and comes up with the) *spyi-ti* experience?”<sup>51</sup> And the answer starts with an exclamation of wonder and then elaborates this *spyi-ti* experience in the first place. It runs as follows:<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, the locale (*gnas*) is the undivided and indivisible whole (*bkol-med*) and the time (*dus*) is the unity of the (so-called) three aspects of time in which there is neither a before nor a hereafter (*snga-phyi med-pa*). Padmasambhava’s insistence on the “no,” the “is-not” (*med*) is reminiscent of the words of Basilides:

There was when naught was, nay, even that ‘naught’ was not aught of things that are [even in the world of reality]. But nakedly, conjecture and mental quibbling apart, there was absolutely not even the One [the Logos of the world of reality]. And when I use the term ‘was,’ I do not mean to say that it was [that is to say, in any state of being]; but merely to give some suggestion of what I wish to indicate, I use the expression ‘there was absolutely naught.’ For that ‘naught’ is not simply the so-called Ineffable; it is beyond that. For that which is *really* ineffable is not named Ineffable, but is superior to every name that is used.

(Quoted from G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, p. 256).

Of course, the idea of the “non-existent” (*asat*) is also found in the early Upaniṣads, but it never “caught on.”

<sup>51</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 126b:

*gong-brgal spyi-ti ji-ltar lags*

<sup>52</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 126b–127a:

*e-ma-ho  
ngo-mtshar khyad-par 'phags  
theg-pa dgu rtse spyi-ti yo-ga 'di  
gzhan-nas mi-myed rang-las rnyed  
theg-mchog ngo-mtshar khyad-par-can  
rdzogs-chen spyi-ti lta-ba ni  
snang-srid 'khor-'das ma-lus-pa  
ka-dag rten-med chen-por grol  
yin-min rtsi-gdab med-pa'i dgongs-pa shar  
bya-btsal rtsol-sgrub [127a] med-pa-ru  
zang-ka rnal-mar gnas-pa'o  
skye-med dngos-med 'bras-bu blo-las-'das  
e-ma ngo-mtshar rmad-byung chos  
gzhan-las mi-'byung A-las byung*

*E-ma-ho*

What an extraordinary miracle!

This *spyi-ti* experience that is the peak experience of the nine spiritual pursuits,

Is not obtained from someone or from somewhere else, but is obtained from (wholeness) itself.<sup>53</sup>

The vision (opened by) the *spyi-ti* experience, ultimate completeness,

The supreme spiritual pursuit (that is) of the nature of an extraordinary miracle,

Is the dissolution of the totality of the phenomenal and its interpretation in terms of samsara and nirvana

In the (whole's) symbolic pregnance, the ultimate non-localizability.

(The whole's) meaning<sup>54</sup> that has nothing to do with the predetermined notions of it being this or not being this, (in its) having come-to-the-fore (as an experience)

Without there being in it something to look for and then to prove what one has been looking for,

Abides in (and as) the (whole's) immediacy (that is its) stillness

The no-birth, the no-substance (that one claims to be the) goal (of one's search) surpasses (the confines of) the intellect.

*E-ma* ! What a miraculous and wondrous teaching!

It does not originate from some other (teaching), but has originated from (its first utterance as the) *A*.<sup>55</sup>

*A-la-la-ho* ! (Reality's) totality, collected in a lump, dissolves in the ultimacy of the (whole's) symbolic pregnance.

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*a-la-la-ho ma-lus ril-po ka-dag chen-por grol*

<sup>53</sup> This statement is, to a certain extent, reminiscent of the manner in which Mani obtained his teaching, as pointed out by Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 335:

... he did not derive his teachings from human book wisdom but, as we are told elsewhere, the "most blessed father" viz, his "light-spirit" (*nous*) elected and called him "out of the congregation of the multitude that does not perceive the truth" to reveal to him his "mysteries" and those of the whole cosmos.

But there is a tremendous difference, because Padmasambhava's thinking is holistic, not dualistic or even theistic.

<sup>54</sup> *dgongs-pa*. The "literal" meaning of this term is "intentionality" in the sense as developed, explicated, and summed up by Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 314, to the effect that

Intentionality is neither something objective nor something subjective in the traditional sense.

<sup>55</sup> The *A* is the first vowel and letter in the Sanskrit alphabet and the last consonant and letter in the Tibetan alphabet. Padmasambhava's insight has found its confirmation in modern times by Arturo B. Fallico, *Art and Existentialism*, p. 64:

The indifferently possible at the base of our existential activity posits its own self-presence in an *utterance* which asserts nothing and demonstrates nothing, but which nonetheless initiates everything by making it possible for us to speak at all.

Padmasambhava's presentation of the *yang-ti* experience, put in the mouth of the teacher "Nobirth Symbolic Pregnance" (*skye-med ka-dag*),<sup>56</sup> makes it abundantly clear that it is *ek-static* in the sense of the Greek expression *ekstatikon* that, as interpreted by Martin Heidegger, means a "being-outside-self that comes-toward-self, comes-back-to-self, and enpresents."<sup>57</sup> This enpresenting begins with an utterance that is at once evocative and expansive, with one or two recognizable Sanskrit or semi-Sanskrit words being used in what is an otherwise unidentifiable idiom and, hence, a clear case of glossolalia.<sup>58</sup> The account then goes to the experience itself, described in the following words:<sup>59</sup>

This *yang-ti* experience, the intensity/energy in sun and moon,  
Is not something that can be categorized (in terms of the traditional  
steps of) a vision's (pre-established content), its imaginative develop-  
ment, its working out (in one's life), and its (teleological) climax;  
There is nothing of an "in-front-of-it" (to hold the experiencer's gaze),  
it is non-referential, ever fresh, free from the limitations set by the  
intellect;  
It is the loosening-up and dissolution of the totality of the phenomenal  
in the ultimate no-name (*ming-med chen-po*),

<sup>56</sup> See also above note 48 for the alternative "name" of this teacher as *ka-dag skye-med*.

<sup>57</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 267. For a detailed discussion of *ecstasis* as being of ontological significance, rather than being merely some altered state of consciousness or some kind of "spirit possession," see David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, pp. 275–76, and *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> The matter is made worse by the atrocious transliteration of foreign words by Tibetan scribes. For this reason I have omitted this and the other "glossolalic" formula in this passage in the translation, but retained both of them in the original Tibetan quote.

<sup>59</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 127a:

*a-ti-tra-bhyo-ya-thu-la-dharmma-dha-du / a-a thi-thi*  
*yang-ti nyi-zla'i snying-po 'di*  
*lta-sgom-spyod-'bras bsgrub-tu med*  
*gtad-med dmigs-med so-ma blo-las grol*  
*snang-ba thams-cad ming-med chen-por grol*  
*ka-dag skye-med dngos-po'i chos-rnams med*  
*spyi-ti-nyid-las gang-gis 'phags zhe-na*  
*snang-ba'i rnam-pa gang-la yang*  
*ming-'dogs med-par thig-le spyi-brtol yin*  
*dag dang ma-dag med-par gti-mug chen-por grol*  
*khams-gsum sdug-bsngal med-par 'di-ka lta-bur grol*  
*sangs-rgyas sems-can 'gro-drug gnas-med-par*  
*blos btags ming-'dogs med-par grol*  
*chos-zad blo-stor mtshon-brjod-bsam-las-'das-par grol*  
*sarva-dharmā-bhyo-ha-thu-la-mu-la a*  
*chang-med cir snang ming-med chen-por grol*

The symbolic pregnance, the no-birth, the No of all particular existents.

In which way does (this experience) stand out from the *spyi-ti* experience?

Concerning anything observable in what is (the whole's) lighting-up,<sup>60</sup> (This experience), without assigning names, is the (whole's) "in-formation" dynamics that nullifies the "collective" (*thig-le spyi-brtol*), (which means that)

The symbolic (pure, *dag*) and the nonsymbolic (impure-opaque, *ma-dag*) dissolve in ultimate Dullness/Darkness (*gti-mug chen-po*).<sup>61</sup>

The three worlds, with none of their frustrations continuing, dissolve in what is "like a 'this'."<sup>62</sup>

Without there being a "place" for the six kinds of the living, be they spiritually awake ones or ordinary persons,

(All of that which is deemed to be "reality") dissolves in what the intellect cannot analyze<sup>63</sup> and name;

(All of that which is deemed to be "reality") dissolves (in the dimension in which the intellect's reality is "all over and done with," (in which) the intellect itself has lost its *raison d' être*, and which lies beyond the scope of what can be demonstrated, spoken of, and thought about.

(The whole's) utter nothingness that lights up as anything, dissolves in the ultimate no-name (*ming-med chen-po*).

In unmistakably radical terms Padmasambhava presents the *yang-ti* experience as being a vision of wholeness *as* wholeness precisely because it *nullifies* any attempt at totalizing any aspect of its dynamics of which the "collective"—maybe we should even speak of the collective unconscious—is one of its most resilient strictures, and because as such it is a continual loosening-up and release (standing "free," *grol*) from the standard re-presentational patterning of a suffocating metaphysics of ego-subjects and their objects. The *yang-ti*

<sup>60</sup> *snang-ba'i rnam-pa*. The "observable" (*rnam-pa*) is a kind of closure of the whole's lighting-up (*snang-ba*) that, in modern terms, corresponds to what David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, p. 151, has called the holomovement.

<sup>61</sup> This idea of an ultimate dullness/darkness/[ignorance] is strikingly similar to the "Great Ignorance" of which Basilides speaks. See G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, pp. 270–71.

<sup>62</sup> Padmasambhava's "like a 'this'" (*'di-ka lta-bu*) is strikingly similar to Levin's "hermeneutical 'as'." See David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, p. 461:

The seer's way of seeing is hermeneutical: hermeneutically circumspective. Instead of seeing things one-dimensionally, as most of us do today, in this age of reductionism, his gaze sees things in terms of a hermeneutical 'as'.

<sup>63</sup> *blos btags*. This seems to be a misspelling of the more commonly used *blos brtags* (*btags* and *brtags* are homonymous).

experience is, if we may say so, a penetration into the very dynamics of wholeness that, as the opening line in the above quotation indicates, is sheer intensity/energy as brilliant as the light of sun and moon, and that is *in*-formation in the strict sense of the word: nullifying (old) strictures and letting the radiance of Being shine in all its freshness and brilliance.

The Tibetan term for this *in*-formation dynamics is *thig-le*. Strictly speaking this term is untranslatable and its rendering by *in*-formation is little more than a pointer, and certainly not a "definition." Pamasambhava's own hermeneutical interpretations may help us to understand what is meant by this term and what is its bearing on the *yang-ti* experience.

Let us begin with a terse and seemingly cryptic statement, aimed at explicating the sub-title (*thig-le kun-gsal*) of Padmasambhava's work:<sup>64</sup>

When in the (dimensionality of Being's) no-birth (and) symbolic  
pregnance (its) *in*-formation (dynamics) shines brilliantly,  
The multiple *in*-formation (dynamics bits) shine distinctly (in their)  
brilliance.  
*thig* means unchanging/invariant, *le* means (all-)encompassing/omni-  
present.  
(Being's) symbolic pregnance (is) *in*-formation (as) all-brilliance.

A variation of this explication of Being's or the whole's *in*-formation dynamics with its reference to a multiplicity of distinct *in*-formation bits, is its explication with reference to the coherence of these multiple bits in the overall *in*-formation dynamics (*thig-le kun-'dus*):<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *sPyi-gnad skyon-sel thig-le kun-gsal*, 2: 314(i)b:

*skye-med ka-dag thig gsal-na*  
*sna-tshogs thig-le ma-'dres gsal*  
*thig ni mi-'gyur le ni khyab*  
*ka-dag thig-le kun-gsal khyab*

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*:

*ka-dag dngos-med thig-le-yis*  
*thig-phran ma-lus kun 'dus-so*  
*thig ni skye-ba-med-la bya*  
*le ni 'gag-pa-med-pa yin*  
*kun ni rtsal-sbyang thams-cad de*  
*'dus ni ka-dag chen-por 'dus*  
*de ni thig-le kun-'dus yin*

(Being's) symbolic pregnancy, insubstantial, (as overall) *in*-formation dynamics gathers all *in*-formation bits.

*thig* means no-birth,

*le* means no-ending.

*kun* means all the performances of its functionality,

'*dus* means (their) gathering in (the whole's) ultimate symbolic pregnancy (*ka-dag chen-po*).

The impossibility of demonstrating what is intended by such technical terms as “intensity/energy” (*snying-po*) and “*in*-formation dynamics” (*thig-le*)—which we must nevertheless think of and speak of by way of analogies and paradoxes in order to draw attention to life's mystery—is well brought out in the following passage:<sup>66</sup>

The insubstantiality of (Being's) intensity/energy (with its) *in*-formation (dynamics as its) eigenfunction<sup>67</sup>

Is undemonstrable because it lies beyond the scope of the intellect (operating on the basis of) the instinctual and the conceptual.

Nonetheless, (for the benefit of) people who have no understanding (Its presence and dynamics) can be spoken of by (making use of the) analogy of a shining lamp (that helps a person to)

Look for some treasure in a dark cave (and eventually find it).<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *bCud-spungs sgron-ma*, 2: 318a–318b:

*snying-po thig-le'i rang-bzhin dngos-po med*  
*dran-rtog-blo-las 'das-pas mtshon-du med*  
*'on-kyang ma-rtogs-pa-yi sems-can-la*  
*sgron-ma 'bar-ba'i dpe-yis mtshon-nas ni*  
*mun-khung [318b] gser 'tshol lta-bu bshad-par bya*  
*snying-po'i rang-bzhin mngon-du bstan-du med*  
*dngos-med kun dngos cang-med cir yang snang*  
*gcig-las kun 'byung sna-tshogs gcig 'dus-pa*  
*tha-snyad mtshon-bral dpe-zla med-pa'o*  
*nam-pa kun-ldan gang yang grub-pa med*  
*thig-le chen-po mi-g.yo mi-'gyur-ba*  
*tshogs-brgyad yul min blo-'das byar-med-pa'o*  
*kun-khyab phyogs-med gang yang rgya ma-chad*  
*ka-dag dngos-med rnal-ma zang-ka de*  
*mtshon-bya ma-'gags mtshon-gzhi mi-dmigs-so*  
*snang-cha ma-'gags snang-gzhi ma-grub-bo*

<sup>67</sup> Literally rendered, the term *thig-le'i rang-bzhin* means “the *in*-formation dynamics' own most specific ability-to-be (*in*-formation).”

<sup>68</sup> In his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 44a, Padmasambhava elaborates this analogy in the following manner:

*dper-na mun-par gser stor-ba*  
*btsal-bas mi-rnyed sgron-mes rnyed*  
*de-bzhin ma-rig mun-pa'i nang*  
*snying-po don-gyi gser stor-ba*  
*gzhan-min sgron-ma bzhi-yis rnyed*

(Being's) intensity/energy cannot be displayed ostensibly; (yet) Insubstantial—it is all substantial entities, nothing at all—it presences as anything;  
 From its oneness everything originates, the multiplicity (of what has so originated) gathers in its oneness.  
 It is without compare since common parlance has nothing about it to demonstrate it.  
 Possessing all observable qualities, it is not found as any one of them. (This) *in*-formation dynamics in its ultimacy is stable and invariant, Not being an object for the eight perceptual patterns,<sup>69</sup> it is beyond the intellect (operating on the basis of these patterns) and cannot be made an (intellectual) construct.  
 All-encompassing it is without sections and nowhere is there a break (in its circumference).  
 (With respect to Being's) symbolic pregnance, insubstantiality, stillness, and (utter) nothingness  
 There is no end to (the emergence of the) demonstrable, but a ground for this emergence is not observable;  
 There is no end to (the coming-to-presence of the) phenomenal, but a ground for this coming-to-presence is not found.

After this excursion into the dynamics of Being's, the whole's intensity/energy and, or what is the same, its functioning as *in*-formation, let us hear what Padmasambhava has to say about the latter's nullifying force that effects the "visible" and the "invisible" or "col-

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*de-la sgron-ma rnam-pa bzhi*  
*rang-gsal sems-kyi sgron-ma dang*  
*rtogs-pa ye-shes sgron-ma dang*  
*rang-byung ngang-dangs sgron-ma dang*  
*snying-po chos-nyid sgron-ma'o*

Just as someone searching for a treasure of gold lost in a dark place  
 Will not find it (by merely searching for it), but will find it with the help of a lamp's light,  
 So also the lost gold of one's existential reality, (Being's) intensity/energy,  
 Will be found by no other means than with the help of four lamps.  
 The four lamps are  
 The lamp of one's self-luminous mind,  
 The lamp of one's understanding (one's existential reality) through originary awareness modes,  
 The lamp of one's self-originated disposition to be alight, and  
 The lamp of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, which is (Being's) intensity/energy (itself).

<sup>69</sup> These are the traditional five senses, the "sixth" and "seventh" being the perception of ideas, straightforward and affectively toned, respectively, and the perceptual mode that reflects the experieñcer's embeddedness in a particular niche.

lective” in Padmasambhava’s diction. These are his words put in the mouth of the teacher “Nobirth Symbolic Pregnancy:”<sup>70</sup>

(In) the brilliance of the originary awareness modes (after the whole’s) *in*-formation dynamics has nullified the “visible,”

Unknowing is not seen to exist (as some existent).

Although there is the duality of unknowing and originary awareness modes,

This duality exists (only) in the dichotomizing intellect.

In the understanding of the real meaning of the *yang-ti* experience this duality does not exist:

There is no difference between the unknowing and the originary awareness modes:

Non-understanding and understanding are one and the same as far as the way is concerned;

There is neither a gate (through which the originary awareness modes) shine forth, nor is there a gate (through which the experiencer’s cognitive potential) may go astray.

If there is a real understanding, once the whole’s *in*-formation dynamics has nullified the “collective,”

There is (no longer) a gate through which to go astray, since there is (no longer) a gate through which to rise.

Just as the rising of the brilliant sun

In the pitch-black darkness of the night

<sup>70</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 131a:

*thig-le mthong-brtol ye-shes gsal*  
*ma-rig yod-par ma-mthong-ngo*  
*ma-rig ye-shes mam gnyis kyang*  
*rnam-rtog blo-la gnyis-snang ste*  
*yang-ti don rtogs gnyis-ka med*  
*ma-rig ye-shes tha-dad med*  
*ma-rtogs rtogs-pa lam-du gcig*  
*'char-sgo 'khrul-sgo gang yang med*  
*thig-le spyi-brtol rtogs-pas-na*  
*'char-sgo med-la 'khrul-sgo med*  
*dper-na mtshan-mo'i mun-nag-na*  
*sūrya gsal-ba'i nyi shar-bas*  
*mun-pa ma-spangs 'od-du gsal*  
*'od dang mun-pa nam-mkhar gcig*  
*de-bzhin ma-rig sgrib-g.yog-la*  
*thig-le gsal-dag nyi shar-bas*  
*ma-rig ma-spangs ka-dag chen-por gsal*  
*bag-chags sgrib-g.yog 'od-gsal chen-por gsal*  
*gti-mug chos-sku rang-bzhin gcig*

I have emended the first line according to the *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 1: 28a. Neither the reading of the sDe-dge edition nor the one of the Thimpu edition makes any sense. The same remarks apply to line seven in this stanza, which I have emended according to the context.

Does not dispel the darkness, but shines brilliantly as a sheer light—  
 Light and darkness are one and the same for the sky—  
 So the rising of the sun, the (whole's) brilliant and pure (symbolic)  
*in*-formation dynamics,  
 (From out of) the obscurations and veils (cast over it by its) unknow-  
 ing (of itself)  
 Does not dispel this unknowing, but shines brilliantly as (the whole's)  
 ultimate symbolic pregnance.  
 The obscurations and veils by (the experiencer's) inveterate tendencies  
 shine (in what they have been all the time) as (the whole's) ultimate  
 brilliance.  
 (The experiencer's "feeling" of being caught up in) dullness/darkness  
 (*gti-mug*) and (his "feeling" of being a luminous) meaning-structure  
 (*chos-sku*) are one and the same in (the whole's) own most specific  
 ability-to-be.

The "way" mentioned in a passing reference at the beginning of this stanza gains added significance from the elaboration of it toward the end of this discussion of what we, caught in a static conception of the world, so unlike the dynamic one of Padmasambhava, would call "absolute transcendence." But absolute transcendence is a contradiction in terms: what is absolute cannot affect me in any way and yet, in view of my being a dynamic system, acts in me, in the words of Erich Jantsch, as<sup>71</sup>

the open interaction of processes in the instability phase between two structures—the phase in which novelty breaks in, the law of large numbers is rendered invalid and the fluctuations of consciousness prepare the decisions for the next autopoietic structure.

From the perspective of wholeness, this instability phase is the "way" that, as a possible "to," may lead in any of the two directions our binary mode of thinking is able to grasp.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, from the perspective of wholeness, there cannot be a way in the ordinary sense of the word (which would destroy the whole's undividedness); rather the way is the whole's dynamics, a giant fluctuation. This is obviously what Padmasambhava intends, when he declares:<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *The Self-organizing Universe*, p. 308.

<sup>72</sup> On the meaning of "to" see Edward de Bono, *Water Logic*, p. 11. In the present context his statement is particularly significant:

An unstable system can become a stable system. A stable system can become an unstable system. One thing leads to another.

<sup>73</sup> *Ny-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 131b:

*rgyu-rkyen 'pho-'gyu# med-pa'i don rtogs-nas*

Once one has understood the meaning of (Being's) not stepping out of itself nor changing into something other than itself under (certain) causes and conditions,<sup>74</sup>

(Being's) intensity/energy, purer than pure, unerring, the sure way,  
(In its being) no-birth, symbolic pregnancy, not (being) something that can be turned into a construct, (lies) beyond the scope of the intellect.

Once one has understood the meaning of insubstantiality, (a) dissipating (into nothing), the no-name

There are (no longer) the gates through which (one's) originary awareness may rise and shine or the gates through which one may go astray.

Therefore (one speaks of) a primal dissipating and unfolding (*ye sangs-rgyas*) in (Being's) primordially.

If our becoming *Man/human* is a giant fluctuation, as intimated by the phrase *ye sangs-rgyas*, then, since we are the whole (and yet, from our ingrained perspective, only a part of it), the whole, too, is such a fluctuation. Thus, Padmasambhava is able to state:<sup>75</sup>

Before (anything) had originated (or before anything) had been born  
(or before there was) a beginning,

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*snying-po yang-dag ma-nor nges-pa'i lam  
skye-med ka-dag byar-med blo-'das yin  
dngos-med zang-thal ming-med don rtogs-pas  
'char-sgo 'khrul-sgo gnyis-ka med  
de-phyir thog-mar ye-sangs-rgyas*

<sup>74</sup> This is the standard Buddhist critique of the Brahmanical (Upaniṣadic) teaching.

<sup>75</sup> *Rin-chen sgron-ma rtsa-ba'i rgyud*, 1: 110a–110b:

*ma-byung ma-skyes thog-ma'i sngon-rol-na  
ming-med mnyam-nyid phyogs-lhung med-pa-las  
rtsal-gyi yan-lag rtogs-pa'i zer 'phros kyang  
'phro-sa ma-rnyed gzhi-yi klong-du thim  
gzhi-nyid ngo-shes rtogs-pa'i gdeng ldan-pas  
sngon-thog gzhi-yi sangs-rgyas zhes-bya'o  
dper-na ga-bur gzhi-la gnyis med kyang  
tsha-grang rkyen-gyis sman dug gnyis-su snang  
grang-ba'i dug-du ngo-shes za mi-srid  
de-bzhin gzhi-yi ngang-la kun byung-bas  
rtogs ma-rtogs-kyis 'khor-'das gnyis-s nang yang  
ma-rtogs 'khor-ba rtogs-pas gzhi shes-na  
rtogs-pa'i gdeng-ldan 'khor-bar 'khrul mi-srid  
des-na spyi-gzhi rgya-chad med-na yang  
de-nyid ngo-shes sangs-rgyas zhes-bya ste  
ma bu dbyer-med ye sangs-rgyas-pa'o*

Out of (this) no-name, the (whole's) identity (with itself and everything else),<sup>76</sup> the (whole's) impartiality,  
The branchings of its functionality (as) rays of understanding shone forth,

But finding no place where to rest, they subsided in the vortex of Being (that was their ground and source).

(A person who feels) assured through his understanding of Being  
Is this (pre)-primordial Being's dissipating-cum-unfolding (*sangs-rgyas*).

For example, camphor in itself is not of a dual nature,

But (exposed to) conditions of heat and cold it seems to have the properties of being a medicament and of being a poisonous substance.

Recognizing it to be poison for coldness, one will not eat it;

Similarly, since out of the dimensionality of Being everything originates,

It is through understanding and non-understanding that samsara and nirvana make their presence felt:

Non-understanding is samsara, but when through understanding one recognizes Being (in its beingness)

One will, in one's feeling assured through understanding, not go astray into samsara.

Therefore, although Being from the perspective of its collectivity (*spyi-gzhi*) is an unbroken whole,

It is the recognition of it (as what it is) that is called (the whole's) dissipating-cum-unfolding (*sangs-rgyas*), (which means that)

The inseparability of mother and child is the primal dissipating-cum-unfolding (*ye sangs-rgyas*).

With this reference to the inseparability of mother and child, Padmasambhava, not unexpectedly, gives a distinctly human aspect to Being that now, if we may say so, is the Being-that-we-are and the Being-as-we-experience-it/ourselves. Lest the reader may misunderstand "inseparability" as involving two entities (a mother *and*

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<sup>76</sup> It should be noted that, while our "identity" is primarily a static concept, the Tibetan *mnyam-nyid*, as evinced by the *nyid*, is a dynamic concept. "Modern" physics comes closest to the "old" dynamic world-view. Erich Harth, *The Creative Loop: How the Brain Makes a Mind*, p. 6, pertinently remarks:

It has been said that the physicist's way of understanding any process in nature is to demonstrate that, in fact, no fundamental change has taken place. Stars are not born, nor do they die. They are merely one of the ever-changing forms that matter or energy takes on, from diffuse clouds of dust and gas swirling through space to the hydrogen- and helium-burning suns, and finally—no, never *finally*—to the supernovas that collapse into the nothingness of black holes while exploding at the same time into the same stuff from which they were made originally: more swirling clouds of dust and gas expanding into space.

a child), he/she may be reminded of Padmasambhava's insight, expressed in the laconic statement:<sup>77</sup>

That which makes a mother a "mother" is the child, and that which makes a child a "child" is the mother:

The inseparability of mother and child is what is meant by a necessary unity.

We have seen that the *spyi-ti* experience was related to "thinking's thinking" (*sems-nyid*)—I stay with this "upgraded" term, though "sheer intensity" might be a more accurate translation/interpretation—that, on the basis of the principle of complementarity, so characteristic of Padmasambhava's thinking, is complementary to the "giving birth to thoughts/meanings" (*chos-nyid*). Accordingly, when the *yang-ti* experience is expressly stated to be related to this "giving birth to thoughts/meanings," a marked shift in attention has occurred, such that the immediacy of experience in being an *Erlebnis* (a living experience) has been given precedence over the immediacy of experience in being an *Erfahrung* (lived and reflected-on experience). Both these nuances are so intricately and intimately intertwined that, from the perspective of their dynamics, they lead to the individual's *immediacy of existence* which we, as experiencers, "feel" to constitute a tension-field. In this tension-field the above mentioned two basic principles of "thinking's thinking" (*sems-nyid*) and "the giving birth to thoughts/meanings" (*chos-nyid*) are discernible and, again, "felt" to determine the inner limits of our becoming and being human.<sup>78</sup> Of the *yang-ti* experience with its em-

<sup>77</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 24b:

*ma-gnad bu-la bu-gnad ma*  
*ma bu dbyer-med dgos-don-gnad*

<sup>78</sup> Admittedly, as noted previously, both terms, *sems-nyid* and *chos-nyid*, are difficult to grasp, not only because we tend to think that thoughts and/or meanings (*chos*) are the products of an agency called thinking (or Mind/mind, *sems*), but also because our language—it cannot be emphasized too strongly that language influences thinking—is not geared to a world-view in which process takes precedence over structure, as is intimated by the innocently looking particle *nyid*. Certainly, because of the omnipresence of the experiencer, the universe may be said to be a big thought, but this is not of much help. On the contrary, it tacitly perpetuates the ego-logical premise of the experiencer's thinking. As a matter of fact, it is this premise, re-inforced by the prevailing rational(istic) approach to life's mystery and a human being's existence, that is undermined, if not to say, invalidated by the "dynamizing" particle *nyid*. In Padmasambhava's process- and human-oriented thinking, *sems-nyid* and *chos-nyid* are complementary to each other in an "evolutionary" dynamics, setting up "a relation space which is created

phasis on the “giving birth to thoughts/meanings” Padmasambhava says:<sup>79</sup>

The vision offered by the *yang-ti yoga* is (such that)  
 In the (dimensionality of the) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, unfathomable as to its depth and width,  
 All logical constructs lose their limitations (imposed on them by) the categories of rational thought.  
 Just as out of the sky that has no limits  
 The multiplicity of phantasmata (comes to the fore and) dissolves in the dimensionality of the sky,  
 So also in the vastness (of the whole’s unfathomable) depth and width  
 The branchings (of its dynamics), all the phenomena (as) labelled by (the experienter’s) excitation/excitability, [together with]  
 This excitation/excitability and the limitations (under which it operates) dissolve in the dimensionality (in which nothing of this sort obtains).

We have spoken of the principle of complementarity, but this is a “cold” concept, lacking in human “warmth.” This vital aspect is introduced by extending the binary relation between the sheer intensity of “thinking’s thinking” and the utter extensity of the “giving birth to thoughts/meanings” to a ternary relation and, as is done by Padmasambhava, by speaking of this relation in terms of Father-Mother-(Only) Son, whereby the complexity of the total situation becomes humanly meaningful. Padmasambhava’s relevant passage runs as follows:<sup>80</sup>

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*ab novo* and which enhances the complexity of the overall system.” (Erich Jantsch, *The Self-organizing Universe*, p. 176.)

<sup>79</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 35a:

*yang-ti yoga’i lta-ba ni*  
*chos-nyid gting-mtha’ med-pa-la*  
*chos-can thams-cad mu-mtha’-grol*  
*dper-na nam-mkha’ mtha’-med-las*  
*cho’phrud sna-tshogs mkha’-dbyings grol*  
*de-bzhin gting-mtha’ yangs-pa-la*  
*yan-lag rig-pas btags snang kun*  
*rig-pa mu-mtha’ dbyings-su grol*

<sup>80</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*sems-nyid yab-kyi tshul-du gnas*  
*ye-nas mtshon-pa med-pa de*  
*chos-nyid yum-gyi tshul-du gnas*  
*skye-med ’byed-med sras gcig ’khrungs*  
*’byed-med gti-mug chen-po des*

Thinking's thinking has been there in the manner of the archetypal  
 Father,<sup>81</sup>—  
 From time before time (it/he) has been undemonstrable—  
 The giving birth to thoughts/meanings has been there in the manner of  
 the archetypal Mother,  
 No-birth, no-division—(such) was born (their) Only Son.  
 No-division is ultimate Dullness/Darkness[Ignorance].

The similarity of Padmasambhava's words with gnostic, specifically Barbelognostic and Valentinian, ideas is unmistakable, even if no trace of their all-male utopia can be detected in his thinking.<sup>82</sup> Still,

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The first three lines are missing in the Thimpu edition (vol. 5, p. 534). The sDe-dge edition reads *stong-nyid* instead of *sems-nyid*. The cue to replace *stong-nyid*, a term hardly ever used by Padmasambhava, by *sems-nyid* in the first line of this stanza is provided by the word *skye-med* in line four of this stanza. In this work (2: 204a) Padmasambhava uses the phrase *sems-nyid skye-med kun-bzang* "thinking's thinking, (Being's) no-birth, goodness *par excellence*." In this connection it is worth noting that in the *Tripaite Tractate* (Nag Hammadi Codex I.5.51.8ff.) "God the Father is ungenerated (*agennetos*) and by implication the "good *par excellence*." Of course, the idea of a God in any sense is absent in Buddhism, and Padmasambhava's thinking is "concretely" human-oriented, not "speculatively" god-oriented. The second line in this stanza seems to be a gloss by the scribe. The last line, found in both the Thimpu and sDe-dge editions, also seems to be a gloss. It clearly links Padmasambhava with the Gnostic Basilides.

<sup>81</sup> I used "archetypal," short for "archetypal image," in the sense of its interpretation by James Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology*, p. 13:

The word "archetypal" ... rather than pointing *at* something archetypal points *to* something, and this is *value* ...

and

As intentional force and person, such an image presents a claim—moral, erotic, intellectual, aesthetic—and demands a response.

<sup>82</sup> The very wording of an "Only Son" (*sras-gcig*) is poignantly gnostic. When, furthermore, Padmasambhava speaks of three teacher-kings as forming a uni-trinity, as he does in his *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 287b:

*ston-pa'i rgyal-po bsam-med brjod-'das dang*  
*ston-pa'i rgyal-po brjod-med blo-'das dang*  
*ston-pa'i rgyal-po dran-med yid-la byar-med gsum*  
*ye-thog ye-gnas ston-pa nram-gsum-mo*

The teacher-king—unthinkable and beyond (the possibility of) speaking (of and about him);

The teacher-king—ineffable and beyond the scope of the (ego-centric) intellect;

The teacher-king—non-instinctual and irreducible to (a content of) ego-logical thinking;

These are the three aspects of the teacher who has been primordially there since the onset of (Being's) primordially,

there is little doubt that he was well acquainted with the Plotinian "noetic triad" and the "Triple Power doctrine" of the Sethian Gnostics. On these ideas see Peter Manchester, "The Noetic Triad in Plotinus, Marius Victorinus, and Augustine" in

what does the provocative reference to “ultimate Dullness/Darkness/[Ignorance]” mean, when the unfolding process is understood as a “description” of our becoming Man/human (*Menschwerdung*) with its climaxing in spiritual wakefulness and when in gnostic texts the Son is the *Nous*, be this the universal or individual *nous*? The answer seems to lie in the fact that the *nous* in any form is an intellectual and, by implication, speculative cognitive process which is wrapped up in its own constructions and gets lost in a labyrinth of mirages. Its tool, logic, is ineffectual, since it is the logic of phantasms. Only “ultimate Dullness/Darkness/[Ignorance]”—not just mere ignorance, euphemistically called reason or intellect, *nous* or *logos*—, the poet’s and the (modern) physicist’s “black light,”<sup>83</sup> the as yet undivided and unfolded and hence not intellectually encapsulated can become a person’s unfolding that is his/her becoming alight.<sup>84</sup>

As Padmasambhava now continues, the sheer intensity of this complementarity is “felt” as operance or the (whole’s) effectiveness principle (*thabs*) and intense cognitiveness or the (whole’s) appreciation principle (*shes-rab*). Both of them are pre-egological action patterns and, in their being wrapped up in each other, imaged as an

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Richard T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, pp. 207–222, and John D. Turner, “Gnosticism and Platonism: The Platonizing Sethian Texts from Nag Hammadi in their Relation to Later Platonic Literature” in the same work, pp. 425–495,

Between the two “qualifications” of each of the three teacher-kings there exists an internal logic such that the second qualification is a *con*-sequence of the first one. Since with respect to the first teacher-king there exists nothing of what is our usual reifying thinking, we simply also have no words (for it/Him), for words refer to things. Since with respect to the second teacher-king there are no words (for it/Him), we cannot *re*-presentationally think. Since with respect to the third teacher-king there exists nothing of anything that might be called “instinctual” or “libidinal” or what Erich Jantsch, *The Self-organizing Universe*, p. 163, has termed “organismic mind,” there does not exist the possibility of reducing this teacher-king to an object the ego can manipulate possessively. While C. G. Jung was basically correct in drawing a distinction between instincts and archetypes, at the time of writing about this difference by assigning the instincts to the physiological and the archetypes to the psychological he could not but fail to see that process thinking does not admit of any sharp separation between opposite aspects of reality.

<sup>83</sup> Arthur Zajonc, *Catching the Light. The Entwined History of Light and Mind*, pp. 325–329.

<sup>84</sup> It may not be without interest to point out that, while in Gnosticism the image of the Only Son is associated with the idea of a redeemer who descends from above and works from outside on mankind, Padmasambhava’s whole is self-redemptive and starts from “ultimate Dullness/Darkness” (*gti-mug chen-po*), an archetypal theme that has found its personalistic expression in one of the figures in the Grail legend, *Perceval (Parsifal)*, “a pure fool, through pity wise,” as he was called by Wolfram von Eschenbach and Richard Wagner.

intimate “embrace,” a new situation is created or, more exactly, evolves—the birth of their Only Son who exemplifies the total situation’s non-premeditation (*rtsi-gdab med-pa*). In the words of Padmasambhava:<sup>85</sup>

The effectiveness principle, the king,<sup>86</sup> is present as the archetypal Father;

Dissociated from origination and cessation [valid only for things and passing whims], the appreciation principle<sup>87</sup> is present in the manner of the archetypal Mother;

(From them) is born their Only Son (who is) non-premeditation.

The dissociation from any origination and cessation leads to the problem of a beginning and an end. This question has occupied the minds of all those who subscribe to a static world-view in which the whole universe, like any other thing, must have a beginning (*arche*) and, by implication, an end (*telos*). For a process-oriented thinker like Padmasambhava, this very question is redundant, if not meaningless—a process has neither a beginning nor an end. To make matters even more complicated, while for us the terms “beginning” and “end” have primarily temporal connotations, the corresponding

<sup>85</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*thabs-kyi rgyal-po yab-tu gnas*  
*skye-'gag kun-bral shes-rab yum-gyi tshul*  
*rtsi-gdab med-pa i sras gcig 'khrungs*

<sup>86</sup> With Padmasambhava the idea of the king is akin to the German mystic Meister Eckhart’s idea of Godhead. According to him, Godhead does not do anything because there is nothing for it/Him to do. Only god, the god-ego or, what is the same, the ego-god does everything. With the emergence of the ego, a sort of malfunctioning and “downward going astray” (*mar-'khrul*) in a maze of broken pieces, there occurs the inevitable scheming, designing, and intending, all of which is a travesty of both the effectiveness principle and the appreciation principle: effectiveness is turned into expediency (“climbing the band-wagon”) and appreciation is wittled down to the mere catchword “wisdom,” constantly on the lips of those who have none and try to camouflage their obsession with an idiosyncrasy.

<sup>87</sup> The term *shes-rab* never lost its functional character of discriminating between opposites in its pursuit of that which is systemically wholesome. In his *sPros-bral don-gal*, 1: 85, Padmasambhava explicates this term as follows:

*shes-rab ces-pa ni phyogs-lhung med-pa dang/ so-sor dpyod-pa dang/ mi-'gag-par bshad*

*shes-rab* is said to mean “impartiality,” “discernment-discrimination,” and “continuity.”

The high esteem in which *shes-rab* was held by him, is evident from his comparing it with a dagger (*ral-gri*) and an arrow (*mda'*) because of its sharpness and with a magic key (*'phrul-gyi lde-mig*) because of its ability to open the door to Being’s mystery. See his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 26b, 44a, and 45a.

Tibetan terms *thog-ma* and *mtha'-ma* (*tha-ma*) have spatial connotations as well, “uppermost” and “lowermost” horizontal levels, continuous regions of intensities. In other words, *thog-ma* and *mtha'-ma* (*tha-ma*) are space-time notions. But if there is no beginning/uppermost (level) and no end/lowermost (level), are we ourselves then not the middle, the between, the “inter-being,” the *intermezzo*, the unpredictable and incalculable phase transition?<sup>88</sup> Padmasambhava’s answer to this question is a Yes, and he introduces for this “inter-being” or, more precisely, directional movement the term *bar-do* that in course of time became a favorite (and famous, though mostly misunderstood by reductionists) literary topic.<sup>89</sup> Padmasambhava’s words are:<sup>90</sup>

The nonexistent beginning/uppermost (level) is there in the manner of the archetypal Father;

The nonexistent end/lowermost (level) is there in the manner of the archetypal Mother;

The nonexistent separability-eliminability is (their Only) Son (who) has resolved the uncertainty about (what is the) beginning/uppermost (level) and (what is the) end/lowermost (level).

With this insistence on a triadic “nonexistent,” an “is-not” (*med*) Padmasambhava is able to let the ensuing world-process as a process of its becoming Man/human (*Menschwerdung*) retain and display its imaginal-experiential character. The nonexistent beginning/uppermost (level) lets the whole’s unfolding-enpresenting continue,<sup>91</sup> the nonexistent end/lowermost (level) takes the sting out of the mistaken identifications of the whole’s dynamics, and the non-

<sup>88</sup> In this connection the following words of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 25, are worth noting:

*Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.

<sup>89</sup> See his *bCud-kyi yang-snying*, 2: 267b; his *sPros-pa gcod-pa sde-nga'i rgyud*, 2: 271b; and his *Rin-chen sgron-ma rtsa-ba*, 1: 116b.

<sup>90</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*thog-ma med-pa yab-kyi tshul-du gnas*  
*mtha'-ma med-pa yum-gyi tshul-du gnas*  
*dbye-bsal med-pa'i sras de-yis*  
*thog-mtha' gnyis-kyi dras thag-bcad*

<sup>91</sup> I have borrowed the term “enpresenting” from Heidegger for reasons that will become clear as Padmasambhava’s discussion proceeds. On this term see Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 306–307.

existent separability-eliminability lets meaning as universal connectedness shine forth. In addition, the unitary felt-images of the Only Son, the Father, and the Mother, mark a still pre-ontological and pre-conceptual attempt to come to an understanding of one's self and to distinguish between different "things" in a dimension (the "is-not") where boundaries may be drawn anywhere without having to be drawn, and if they have been drawn dissolve in the dimension from which they have been made to stand out.

If we conceive of this triunely structured "is-not" as pure potential—there is no reason why, for argument's sake, we should not—we can understand Padmasambhava's immediately following statement, how the pure potential becomes its pre-ontological and pre-actual reality of ourselves. He says:<sup>92</sup>

(The whole's) own most unique capability-to-be that has been there since time before time, is to be (presently) there in the manner of the archetypal Father;

(The whole's) all-encompassing omnipresence that has been there since time before time, is to be (presently) there in the manner of the archetypal Mother;

(Their) radiant brilliance-(*cum*)-the giving birth to thoughts/meanings is to be (presently) born (as their) Only Son.

To be sure, the radiant brilliance (*'od-gsal*) of which Padmasambhava here speaks, is an as yet virtual radiance, in the sense that the whole's luminosity (*'od*) is about to radiate (*gsal*). It is not yet the radiance of that which makes its presence felt in whatever lights up to be interpreted as "world."<sup>93</sup> Similarly, the giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*) is a potentiality/possibility, as is the "field" (*dbyings*) as which the giving birth to thoughts/meanings constitutes itself in which these thoughts/meanings have their *raison d'être*.

In this connection it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the images of Father, Mother, and Only Son, reminiscent of the Divine

<sup>92</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*rang-bzhin ye-gnas yab-kyi tshul-du gnas*  
*kun-khyab ye-gnas yum-gyi tshul-du gnas*  
*'od-gsal chos-nyid sras-gcig 'khrungs*

<sup>93</sup> The texts distinguish clearly between *'od-gsal* and *snang-gsal*, the *snang* being the "actual" manifestation and experience of the "virtual" *'od*. For Padmasambhava "world" is always a world of light.

Triad that headed the Sethian pantheon,<sup>94</sup> but that otherwise lack any of the soteriological notions that were rampant in Gnostic and Christian circles, are symbols through which the experiencer (as practitioner) establishes a personal relationship with the forces that work in and through him and, in the final analysis, have shaped and are shaping him, as is shown by their concrescence into the experiencer/practitioner's "own most unique capability-to-be-and-become by being-itself" (*rang-bzhin*). Not only does the experiencer feel himself to be the child of his parents, but also his parents continue living in and through him. In this respect the child or son *is* his parents and, by implication, the past, but he also *is* a new reality and, to the extent that he, as the present, is in search of his beingness, the "priceless Jewel" (*nor-bu*), he also and already is the future by implication.

As in Gnostic ideas, with which Padmasambhava was familiar and which he transformed by his own radical process-oriented visionary thinking, the process of becoming Man/Human, the leitmotiv running through all his writings, is at first a downward movement through fragmentation and dispersion from a world of light and then an upward movement of penetration into the mystery of wholeness, which in static terms is described as a return to one's origin and one's spiritual home. But unlike in Gnosticism no "sin" on the part of the female aspect of wholeness and no male "savior" is involved. The whole process is life's ongoing renewal of itself and, in terms of wholeness, the whole's experiencing of itself through symbols of its own making.

From all that has been said so far, Padmasambhava has revealed himself as an "exceptional" personage whose vision and evolutionary thinking were far ahead of his time and have remained unparalleled throughout the history of Buddhist thought, but the question "Who was (or is) Padmasambhava?" remains unanswered and, perhaps, unanswerable.

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<sup>94</sup> See, in particular, Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 61f.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A TRIPARTITE COSMOS

The cosmos that Padmasambhava presents is an imaginal tripartite world of hierarchically organized planes that reflect a medley of different images and ideas from different contexts uniquely blended into an imposing visionary experience. There is an upper plane, the “world of gods” (*lha'i 'jig-rten*), an in-between plane, the “world of humankind” (*mi'i 'jig-rten*), and a lower plane, the “world of demons” (*klu'i 'jig-rten*).<sup>1</sup> However, Padmasambhava’s tripartite cosmos differs from all other known cosmologies, Indian and non-Indian, based on the number Three, by the absence of a creator, be he a God or a Demiurge.<sup>2</sup> Above all, his cosmos is the account of an inner experience in its very dynamics, the account of an *Erlebnis*, to use the terminology of Wilhelm Dilthey, that ranges from the deepest instinctual level (the “world of demons”) to the highest ethereal level (the “world of gods”). As such it is the psyche’s self-expression or, better, self-presentation. Significantly, this account of a lived experience is communicated by having it placed in the mouth of one or several *mkha’-’gro-ma* (in Sanskrit *dākinī*), elemental psychic forces of a highly inspirational character in female shapes, similar to, but not identical with the *anima* in C. G. Jung’s psychology.<sup>3</sup> Since they themselves are images or symbols of the psyche,

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<sup>1</sup> On the exact meaning of the term “in-between” see above Introduction, pp. 36–37. The rendering of the Tibetan word *klu* by “demons” in the above passage is intentionally vague. In course of time the *klu* who were already known in pre-Buddhist (not necessarily shamanic) circles were identified with the Indian *nāgas*, semi-divine beings having the head of a human and the body of a serpent. Their king is the Indian *Takṣaka*, according to *Atharvaveda* VIII 10.29, a descendent of Viśāla who in Buddhist historiobiographies is the founder of the capital of the kingdom of Vaiśālī, famous for the historical Buddha’s activities. In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 206a, Padmasambhava states that “Takṣaka, the king of the *nāgas* (*klu'i rgyal-po 'Jog-po*), listened to *Kun-tu bzang-po* expounding the Teaching, at the bottom of the sea.”

<sup>2</sup> On the significance of the number Three see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers*, pp. 58–85.

<sup>3</sup> On an in-depth study of Jung’s concept and what it may hold for other disciplines beyond psychology see James Hillman, *Anima. An Anatomy of a Personified Notion*.

they communicate through the language of symbols. Thus, the “upper plane” in this tripartite cosmos is communicated to an attentive audience by the *chos-kyi dbyings-kyi mkha’-’gro-ma* “the female inspirational force into which the whole’s field-like expanse with its possible meanings has crystallized” in the following words:<sup>4</sup>

Above the thirteen levels of the celestial realm (*gnam*), in (what is) a country-like (expanse that is) the vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) sky (*mkha’-klong*), there, in a citadel (that is) of the nature of the vastness (*yangs-pa-can*) of (the experienter’s) enworldedness, archetypal Father, the myriarch (*khri-rje*) *gTsug-brtan* by name, and archetypal Mother, the Sovereign Mistress of the phenomenal world (*snang-srid-kyi bdag-mo*), *sTong-gsal kun-sgrol-ma* by name, united to form the non-duality of operance (*thabs*) and appreciation (*shes-rab*). In the wake of their (mutual) arousal and transport (*byin-rlabs*) in this (felt) non-duality, rain (in the form) of white and red (streams of) nectar (*bdud-rtsi*) poured down from the sky. It was drunk by the sentient beings and passing through their throats it dissolved in the dimensionality of concerned spirituality (*thugs-rje dbyings*). [As a consequence] all the sentient beings realized the level where there is neither birth nor death so that they did not have to roam about in the six life forms of samsara.

This is the (meaning of) uprooting birth and death, expressed by way of symbols:

In the expanse of the sky sun and moon have risen:

Dullness, un-knowing, darkness have gone.

Several points in this presentation of the upper plane of the tripartite cosmos clamor for attention and explanation. There is, first of all, though couched in spatial terms, a felt awareness of an utter transcendence: “above the thirteen levels of the celestial realm,” where the thirteen levels are a reference to the hierarchically arranged abodes of gods as they had already been listed in some works of the

<sup>4</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 23ab:

*gnam rim-pa bcu-gsum-gyi steng-na/ yab khri-rje gtsug-brtan bya-ba dang/ yum snang-srid-kyi bdag-mo [23b] stong-gsal kun-sgrol-ma bya-ba gnyis-kyis/ yul mkha’-klong kun-’byung yangs-pa-can-gyi pho-brang zhes-bya-bar/ thabs dang shes-rab gnyis-su-med-pa’i sbyor-ba byas-pas/ gnyis-su-med-pa’i byin-rlabs-las bdud-rtsi dkar-dmar-gyi char nam-mkha’-la ’bab-pas sems-can-rnams-kyis ’thungs-pas mgrin-pa’i lam-du brgyud-de thugs-rje dbyings-su thim/ sems-can thams-cad skye-shi-med-pa’i dngos-grub thob-ste ’gro-drug-tu mi ’khor-te/ skye-shi rtsad-nas gcod-pa’i brda’ol/*

*nam-mkha’i dbyings-nas nyi-zla shar  
gti-mug ma-rig mun-pa sangs*

old Buddhist Pali canon.<sup>5</sup> This utter transcendence, however, has nothing static or absolute about it; rather, it is a transcendence already and always on the way to become a closure, a celestial realm (*gnam*) that more and more takes on the character of a territorial expanse (*yul*) that yet retains a dimensionality that in its immensity is dynamic through and through—"the vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) sky" (*mkha'-klong*).<sup>6</sup> Apart from emphasizing the experienter's *Befindlichkeit*, the world in which he "finds" himself as an inalienable part and to which he is already pre-ontologically attuned, this image fuses two contrary notions into a single dynamic notion; the vortex intimates and symbolizes the *in*-tensity of the experience, and the immensity of the sky intimates and symbolizes its *ex*-tensity that itself is intensive. This vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) sky presents an utter purity and translucency (*rnam-dag*) to the experienter who is its engaged observer. In addition, this purity and translucency is of symbolic significance and what it signifies is already virtually pre-existing. Padmasambhava elaborates these ideas as follows:<sup>7</sup>

*mkha'* (sky) means the brilliance and radiance of the (whole's) supra-conscious ecstatic intensity;  
*klong* (vortex) means (the whole's) energy, (its) giving birth to thoughts/meanings;

<sup>5</sup> For details see Willibald Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> From a linguistic point of view note the subtle difference between the *gnam* (celestial realm) and the *mkha'* (the immensity of the sky as a vortex).

<sup>7</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 134a:

*mkha' ni rig-pa'i 'od-gsal mkha'*  
*klong ni snying-po chos-nyid klong*  
*rnam-dag 'khrul-pa rnam-par dag*  
*de-phyir mkha'-klong rnam-dag rgyud*  
*mkha' ni rtsal-zer 'od-gsal-la*  
*klong ni snying-po ka-dag klong*  
*rnam-dag blos btags chos-rnams 'gags*  
*de-phyir mkha'-klong rnam-dag rgyud*  
*mkha' ni snang-gsal nam-mkha'-la*  
*klong ni chos-nyid dbyings-kyi klong*  
*rnam-dag chos-can cho-'phrul dag*  
*sprin dang khu-rlangs char ser kun*  
*nam-mkha'i klong-du ye-nas dag*  
*de-bzhin snying-po mkha'-klong-du*  
*yan-lag rtsal-zer ma-lus dag*  
*de-phyir mkha'-klong rnam-dag rgyud*

*rnam-dag* (purity-translucency) means the (whole's) errancy (into mistaken identifications and misplaced concretizations).

Therefore this account of one's existentiality (bears the title) *The Purity-Translucency of the Vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) Sky*.

*mkha'* means the brilliance and radiance of the rays (that express the whole's) functionality;

*klong* means (the whole's) energy, (its) symbolic pregnance;

*rnam-dag* means the cessation of the intellect's postulates.

Therefore ...

*mkha'* means the phenomenal in its radiance;

*klong* means the field-like dimension of the giving birth to thoughts/meanings;

*rnam-dag* means the magic of concrete thoughts/meanings.

Therefore ...

Just as clouds and vapors, rain and hail

Have been virtually pre-existent in the vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) sky,

So in the (whole's) energy, (felt and imaged as) the vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) sky,

Its branchings (constituting an organism's complex patterning), the rays of (the whole's) functionality, have all been virtually pre-existent.

Therefore ...

This vortex-like (swirling immensity of the) sky undergoes, as it were, a kind of nucleation process and becomes, in more tangibly worldly terms, a country-(like dimensionality) or territorial expanse. In so swirling and closing in onto itself, becoming more and more centered, this movement is sensed and felt to form a citadel that yet retains the nature of the (whole's) original immensity. Its name, *yangs-pa-can* "of the nature of an (expanding) vastness," is an allusion to the country of Vaiśālī (in its Tibetan rendering *yangs-pa-can*) that has figured prominently in Buddhist and Brahmanical literature, because the founder of this country, Viśāla, belonged to the highly revered Solar Dynasty that superseded the older Lunar Dynasty. Because of its vastness this citadel is specified as the omnipresent experiencer's "enworldedness" (*kun-'byung*) that on a more concrete (physical-material) level is the sum total of our emotions and karmic blunderings with their more or less dismal consequences. Here, however, this citadel is still imaged as being situated on a supramundane plane and in it, in terms of the proto-pattern of the experiencer's ancestry, archetypal Father (*yab*) and archetypal

Mother (*yum*) live in inseparable union. The names of this archetypal couple are highly revealing. Archetypal Father's name, *gTsug-brtan*, is made up of a noun, *gtsug*, and an adjective, *brtan*. This descriptive compound may be rendered as "(whose) crown (jewel) is firmly planted (on his head)." For reasons that will become clear later, this name may well be understood as a cryptic reference to the Gnostic idea of the Father who is perfectly stable.<sup>8</sup> But, then, this "name" may also be understood as a reference to the "energy center of bliss supreme" (*bde-chen-gyi 'khor-lo*) that in yogic anatomy is located in the crown of the practitioner's (the experiencer's) head, bliss supreme or ecstasy as ek-stasis being the natural and supraconscious "state" of our being. Similarly, the archetypal Father's status as a myriarch (*khri-rje*) suggests, on the part of Padmasambhava, an acquaintance with the Gnostic idea of "commanders" (archons) of whom the "chief archon" is the real ruler of the world who is usually identified with its creator (*demiurgos*).<sup>9</sup>

Archetypal Mother's name, *sTong-gsal kun-sgrol-ma*, is even more intriguing. It is made up of two compounds of which the first, *stong-gsal*, is descriptive of Her ontologically functional character, the second, *kun-sgrol-ma*, is descriptive of Her experientially functional character. Ontologically speaking, She is such that She does not allow permanent structures to form or, the moment they form, are dissolved and voided (*stong*), simply because any permanent structure would curtail and obscure the radiance (*gsal*) that She is. Experientially speaking, She is a motherly (*ma*) force that "sets free" (*sgrol*) in a thorough manner (*kun*) and thus, in the experimenter, effecting the feeling of release. Her dynamic character is further emphasized by Her being referred to as the "Sovereign Mistress of the phenomenal world" (*snang-srid-kyi bdag-mo*). The phrase that has been rendered in English as "the phenomenal world" is understood by Padmasambhava in its etymological sense of "that which lights up (*snang*) and is interpreted probabilistically (*srid*);" this is another way of saying that "phenomenon/phenomenal" is synonymous with "meaning."<sup>10</sup> Meaning is intimately intertwined

<sup>8</sup> On this idea see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 63 and n. 59.

<sup>9</sup> For particulars see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 67f.

<sup>10</sup> The reader may be interested to learn that this idea of Padmasambhava is detectable in modern physics without their representatives having any knowledge of Padmasambhava. See Bernard d'Espagnat's essay "Meaning and being in contemporary physics" and Renée Weber's essay "Meaning as being in the implicate order phi-

with appreciation that is much more than thinking in rational terms. It also embraces feeling, the truly valuing function of ours, inseparable from caring as the exercise of our responsibility toward the world. Unlike things that allow themselves to be manipulated, only meanings can be appreciated, and, vice versa, appreciation is concerned with (and even cares for) meanings, not with manipulating things. No wonder that She is said to function as “appreciation” (*shes-rab*)—appreciating and caring for the meanings that, in the final analysis, are Her children. She is, quite literally, matched by Him who is said to function as “operance” (*thabs*). Operance and appreciation are complementary to each other, the one cannot be without the other and each comprises the other. However paradoxical it may sound, the non-duality of the operance-appreciation duality has far-reaching consequences, inasmuch as any variation in the underlying intensity affects operance as well as appreciation. Since both operance and appreciation are intensive, any increase or decrease in the intensity of the one is matched by a corresponding increase or decrease in the other; the more effective operance becomes, the wider and deeper becomes the field of appreciation. The most natural and obvious way to describe the paradox of this non-dual duality, is through explicit or implicit sexual imagery, as was done poetically by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

Geeinte Zwienatur  
 Der innigen beiden  
 (The loving couple's  
 Twin natures blended into one).<sup>11</sup>

In most cases, such images stay with and elaborate “externals,” but Padmasambhava focuses on the “internal” dynamics of the conjugal union, as is evident from his use of the term *byin-rlabs*, here rendered by “arousal and transport” in order to convey the holistic and charismatic character of this union.<sup>12</sup> He or, more precisely, She, the

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osophy of David Bohm: a conversation” in B. J. Hiley and F. David Peat, eds.: *Quantum Implications*, pp.151–5, 436–50, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Goethe, *Faust I*, “Mountain Gorges,” vv. 11962–63.

<sup>12</sup> The term *byin-rlabs* is used again in the triadic transmission of the *spyi-ti* and *yang-ti* teaching from out of the dimension of the “pleroma,” the undivided whole as the “Teacher (Himself/itself),” as detailed by Padmasambhava in his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 206a. This teaching-transmission is technically known as the *byin-gyis rlabs-kyis bshad-pa*. This teaching-transmission bears witness to a charismatic spirit, to which both Gnostics and Christians (and, by implication, Padmasambhava and his forerunners) laid claim. It is followed by the teaching-transmission *via* the fundamental

*dākinī*, this intrapsychic force communicating what is happening, speaks of the loving pair's (mutual) arousal and transport that triggers the free flow of energy. This flow is imaged and felt as a downpour of rain in two interrelated streams, visualized as being white and red, respectively, and, on closer inspection, turn out to be "feeling-tones" of this very downpour. These streams, therefore, are of symbolic significance and not mere qualifiers of male and female generative fluids, as which a stale reductionism attempts to banalize them. As such "feeling-tones" the colors of this "rain" directly tie in with what is more succinctly referred to as "nectar" (*bdud-rtsi*). Although this English rendering of the Tibetan term is permissible, it fails to convey what is understood by it in the Tibetan context. Padmasambhva's lengthy hermeneutical explication of this term by splitting it into its two components, *bdud* "(anything) deadening" and *rtsi* "(any) juice having a certain consistency" is highly revealing and may here be given in full:<sup>13</sup>

*bdud* means the crowd of divisive thoughts in (one's subjective) mind,  
*rtsi* means the (whole's) originary awareness;  
*bdud* means the gate through which one enters samsara, (one's) spiritual darkness,

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forces as originary awarenesses that go into the making of the concrete individual with an emphasis on individual's spiritual nature as teacher. This is known as the *rang-gi ngo-bos bshad-pa*. The third teaching-transmission is by written documents (*sdeb-sbyor tshig-gis bshad-pa*).

<sup>13</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 235b:

*bdud ni sems-kyi rtog-tshogs yin*  
*rtsi ni ye-shes chen-po yin*  
*bdud ni mun-pa'i 'khor-sgo yin*  
*rtsi ni ye-shes rig-pa'i 'char-sgo yin*  
*bdud ni 'khrul-lugs rnam-gsum yin*  
*rtsi ni ldog-lugs rnam-gsum yin*  
*bdud ni khams-gsum 'khrul-pa ste*  
*rtsi ni 'khrul-gzhi rtsad gcod yin*  
*bdud ni nyon-mongs dug-gsum yin*  
*rtsi ni sku gsung thugs yin-no*  
*bdud ni nyon-mongs dug-lnga yin*  
*rtsi ni sku-lnga ye-shes-lnga*  
*bdud ni nyon-mongs brgyad-khri-stong*  
*rtsi ni chos-sgo brgyad-khri-stong*  
*bdud ni khams-gsum 'khor-ba yin*  
*rtsi ni sku-gsum rgyal-ba'i thugs*  
*bdud ni 'khor-ba'i sems-can yin*  
*rtsi ni myang-'das sangs-rgyas yin*

*rtsi* means the gate that opens to (the light of the whole's) originary awareness with its supraconscious ecstatic intensity;  
*bdud* means the triple mode of going astray,<sup>14</sup>  
*rtsi* means the triple reversal of the going astray;<sup>15</sup>  
*bdud* means the going astray into the three realms of worldliness,<sup>16</sup>  
*rtsi* means to eradicate the cause of this going astray;  
*bdud* means (one's) emotions as three poisons,<sup>17</sup>  
*rtsi* means (one's) bodily felt sense of being-in-the-world, (one's) communicating-with-the-world (in which one "finds" oneself by way of words and gestures), and (one's) solicitude-for-the-world;  
*bdud* means (one's) emotions as five poisons,<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> According to Padmasambhava's *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 13b, this triple mode derives from the whole's dynamics in the sense that its giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*) is prone to be mistaken for an objective cognitive domain (*yul*), that its ecstatic supraconscious intensity (*rig-pa*) is prone to be mistaken for one's subjective (ego-logical) mind (*sems*), and that its fivefold luminosity (*'od-linga*) is prone to be mistaken for one's body (*lus*) always offering a certain complexion. In the apocryphal *Kun-tu bzang-mo klong-gsal nyi-ma'i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 347a, we find the following statement:

*'khrul-lugs rnam-pa mang bshad kyang*  
*ye-shes-linga-yi rtsal-nyid yin*  
*rtsal-gyis ye-shes ngo-ma-shes*  
*dngos-po 'dzin-pa-can-du 'khrul*

Although one can speak of many ways of (one's) going astray, (They all boil down to) the very functionality of the five originary awareness modes. Because of this functionality one does not recognize what originary awareness is about (and as a consequence)

One entertains the mistaken notion that (originary awareness) is of the nature of having some concrete character.

Indeed, this statement is a wonderful illustration of Alfred North Whitehead's "misplaced concreteness."

According to its colophon this work was written down by mKhar-chen-bza' Ye-shes 'tsho-[sic] rgyal, ex-wife of the king Khri-srong lde'u-btsan and chief consort-disciple of Padmasambhava, precisely as spoken by Padmasambhava himself, and then kept secret ("concealed") by her. The work was "rediscovered" by Ratna-gling-pa (1403–1479). This whole account is extremely suspicious. Not only do the contents of this work differ in many respects from Padmasambhava's own (whatever this may mean) writings, but the work itself is already extensively quoted by Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa (1318–1363/4) in his *sNying-thig ya-bzhi*. There is thus a discrepancy of a whole century between the availability of this text and its "rediscovery."

<sup>15</sup> The "reversal" is the recognition of what the whole's dynamics is about.

<sup>16</sup> These are the well-known realms of sensuous and sensual desires, the realms of aesthetic and appreciable forms and patterns, and the realms of the as-yet unformed and unpatterned.

<sup>17</sup> They are the triad of irritation-aversion, desire-and-clinging-to-the-desired, and infatuation-dullness.

<sup>18</sup> These are the three mentioned in the preceding note, to which are added envy and jealousy.

*rtsi* means the five bodily felt patterns as the expressions and the expressed of the five originary awareness modes;  
*bdud* means the eighty-four thousand emotions,  
*rtsi* means the eighty-four thousand topics of morality;<sup>19</sup>  
*bdud* means samsaric mentation (as it pertains to the) three realms of worldliness,  
*rtsi* means (any) victorious one's spirituality (as it expresses itself in his) three gestalts;<sup>20</sup>  
*bdud* means the sentient beings (living) in samsara,  
*rtsi* means the spiritually awakened ones (living) in nirvana.

It will have been noted that each topic in this passage is based on and reflects the principle of complementarity that, as pointed out before, does not admit of any sharp separation between opposite aspects of reality. If now we relate the colors "red" and "white" to the *bdud* and *rtsi* in the compound *bdud-rtsi* we find and can say that "red" concurs with *bdud*, in the widest sense of the word, the "instinctual," and that "white" concurs with the "spiritual." The consequence is that the emerging offspring of the archetypal parents unites both ancestors in himself and that, psychologically speaking, he includes in himself the emotional-instinctual and the spiritual, both of which he nevertheless transcends in his own being.<sup>21</sup> But this is another story.

<sup>19</sup> Following Erich Jantsch, *The Self-organizing Universe*, p. 265, I understand morality as "the direct experience of an ethics inherent in the dynamics of evolution," and ethics as "a behavioral code at the social level." The Tibetan term *chos* is primarily experiential, not prescriptive.

<sup>20</sup> These are the *chos-sku*, the experiencer's bodily (*sku*) "felt" meaning (*chos*) of his and all life; the *longs-sku*, the experiencer's bodily (*sku*) "felt" awareness of (his) possibilities-for-being (*longs*); and the *sprul-sku*, the experiencer's bodily (*sku*) "felt" reaching-out (*sprul*) to the world in thoughtful (non-instinctual) responsiveness.

The Tibetan technical term *rgyal-ba*, here rendered as "(any) victorious one," is extremely difficult to grasp for a Westerner. First of all, any living individual is a complexity of function or resonance patterns, each having its own complexity and "presided over," as it were, by its own "organizer," termed a "victorious one," and who, in turn, presents the above mentioned triad of gestalts. In the total person the complexity of the resonance patterns operates in unison. For further details see Herbert Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, pp. 67-72.

<sup>21</sup> This seems to be the intent of the terse and highly intriguing statement in Padmasambhava's *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 86a:

*gzi-brjid-ldan-pas na sku'o/ thabs dang shes-rab 'dzin-pas na yab yum-mo/ byang-chub chen-po dang ldan-zhing bskyed-pas sras-so*

Because of (the whole's) being endowed with splendor (one speaks of It in terms of an anthropic) gestalt; because of (Its) carrying with it the principles of operance and appreciation, (It is spoken of as) archetypal Father and archetypal Mother; and be-

There is one other point worth examining in the programmatic account of the upper level in this imaginal tripartite cosmos. This is its overall devolutionary and/or evolutionary process character, depending on whether you conceive of the process of our *Menschwerdung* (becoming Man/human) as the end-phase of a pre-figurement (not pre-determination) or as the pre-patterning of Man as we are getting to know him or her in actual life. There is an “initial infinity,” likened to the immensity of the sky, imperceptibly closing in onto itself and becoming, as it were, the “vastness” of a perceptible locale, a country with a citadel at its center. The scene now shifts from this “external” dimensionality to its “inner” dimension that, according to Padmasambhava’s anthropic perspective, presents itself in the images of archetypal Father and archetypal Mother, intimating the likely coming-to-presence of a child.<sup>22</sup> As a matter of fact, “father” and “mother,” though deriving their “meaning” from their being complementary to each other, are meaningless noises. It is the “child” that gives meaning to them, as Padmasambhava knew long ago.<sup>23</sup>

Again, through a subtle move leading to a further “closing in onto itself” the apparent duality of archetypal Father and archetypal Mother is resolved in the intimacy of their union. This intimacy is intimated by the felt sense of becoming mutually aroused and transported, in the wake of which a flow of creative energies is triggered. The account does not say where this flow starts, but the reference to

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cause of (Its) having been generated as being endowed with (spiritual) refinement in an ultimate sense, (It is spoken of as) the Son.

The intriguing part of this statement is its similarity to the structure of the pleromatic family as found with certain Gnostics and detailed by Giovanni Filoramo, *History of Gnosticism*, pp. 63ff. But the main difference between Padmasambhava and the Gnostics lies in the phenomenologically presented experiential approach by Padmasambhava and the speculative preoccupation with the idea of a triple male on the part of the Gnostics. Last but not least, the Tibetan term *sku*, rendered as “gestalt” or “corporeal scheme” as the context requires, is not gender-bound.

<sup>22</sup> The manner in which I understand “archetypal” is based on James Hillman’s explanation. See above Introduction, p. 33 n. 81. Also, I understand the term “anthropic” in its literal sense of *menschlich*, not in the sense in which it is used in the so-called “anthropic principle” that, however appealing it may sound to our ego, falls down in one crucial aspect, as pointed out by Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart, *The Collapse of Chaos*, p. 241. The choice of the neologism “anthropic” is prompted by the fact that the English language has no gender-free equivalent to the ancient Greek *anthropos* or the German *Mensch* with its adjectival form *menschlich*. The English *human* or *human being* is much too clumsy.

<sup>23</sup> See Introduction, p. 31.

the "throat" through which it flows turns out to be a valuable clue. In yogic anatomy the "throat" is midway between the "head" and the "heart" and, as the locale for "speech" (*gsung*), functions as initiating an (intrapyschic) "dialogue" between what is color-symbolically envisioned and pervasively felt as the spiritual and the instinctual. This dialogue or, as we would, because of our more violent temper, say "conflict" is resolved and subsides in man's "proto-spirituality dimensionality" (*thugs-rje dbyings*), located in the "heart." From here it eventually manifests itself as "compassion," spirituality's watered down version in a worldly context, as when we say that "our hearts go out those about whom we care."<sup>24</sup> With the "throat" as the seat of speech (*gsung*) and the "heart" as the seat of spirit/spirituality (*thugs/thugs-rje*) two important facets in man's pre-egological being have been taken care of. Still, there is another, equally important aspect of ours. This is our felt sense of being bodily attuned to the whole that is Being itself, for which the Tibetan term is *sku*. A symbolic reference to it we find in the "crown jewel" (*gtsug*) worn on the myriarch's head. As will be remembered the term for this crown jewel forms part of his name *gTsug-brtan*. By considering the "crown jewel" as a *pars pro toto* expression we recognize in it the missing third—the "body" (*sku*). On this pre-personal dimension of the experiencer's life, this body is still its own *ek-stasis*, and its splendor<sup>25</sup> radiates beyond itself and addresses itself (*gsung*) charismatically to all sentient beings whom its concerned spirituality (*thugs*), with its infinite possibilities of realization, gathers into its orb.

This pre-coding and pre-programming "Body-Speech-Mind" complexity, already linguistically differentiated from its granular "objective" representation,<sup>26</sup> presents and is "felt" as a holistic, dynamic unfolding of an all-embracing universe that is thoroughly anthropic in character and, if we may say so, prefigures (but does not predetermine) its own evolution which is basically open. In a beautiful stanza, placed in the mouth of a *dākinī*, "embodying" the vastness of the creative vacuum, as we would say nowadays,

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<sup>24</sup> It is not without interest to note that Matthew Fox has titled one of his books *A Spirituality named Compassion*.

<sup>25</sup> See above note 21.

<sup>26</sup> The terms *sku*, *gsung*, and *thugs* point to the immediacy of the *Erleben* (lived experience); the "corresponding" terms *lus*, *ngag*, and *sems* refer to the *re*-presentation of the *Erleben* in narrowly circumscribed items that make up the dimension of one's *Erfahrung*.

Padmasambhava sums up the account of the upper plane of (his) tripartite cosmos. There is the “expanse of the sky,” where the sky (*nam-mkha'*) is a symbol for the mind (*sems*) understood in its sheer intensity of “thinking’s thinking” (*sems-nyid*)<sup>27</sup> and explicated in its ontological significance:<sup>28</sup>

*nam* means non-origination,  
*mkha'* means non-cessation;

This *nam-mkha'* that neither originates nor ceases

Is (Being’s) energy (in which) the giving birth to thoughts/meanings  
 (*chos-nyid*) has gathered (as its) vortex.

Here, the image of the giving birth to thoughts/meanings in its dynamics of being a vortex intimates (Being’s) *extensity*.<sup>29</sup> But this extensity exists only by being complementary to and inseparable from (Being’s) *intensity*, intimated by the image of “sun and moon” having risen in it. As is to be expected, in a world suffused with light, both luminaries are of tremendous symbolic significance. Experientially speaking, they point to a transformation of the instinctual and spiritual forces, imaged and “felt” as a downpour of rain, into luminous energies that have been hermeneutically explicated in

<sup>27</sup> The context in which Padmasambhava uses the term *sems* in his *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 342a, makes it quite clear that he understands *sems* as *sems-nyid*. He also is quite explicit that the use of the “sky” as an analogy for the mind (*sems-kyi dpe*) is only a device to rid persons with little or no understanding of their concretistic notions about what is said to be a or the mind:

*nam-mkha' ces ni mtshon-pa yang*  
*ma-rtogs blo-la mtshon-pa yin*  
*nam-mkha' tha-snyad kun dang bral*

Although one uses the word “sky” as a pointer,

This is (only) meant for (a person whose) intellect has no comprehension (of what is at stake).

The sky (itself) is dissociated from all predications [such as existing or nonexisting entitatively].

<sup>28</sup> *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 342a:

*nam ni skye-ba med-pa yin*  
*mkha' ni 'gag-pa med-pa yin*  
*skye-'gag gnyis med nam-mkha' de*  
*snying-po chos-nyid klong-du 'dus*

<sup>29</sup> In his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 20b, where Padmasambhava speaks of the depth and vastness of the dimensionality that is this giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid gting-mtha' yangs-pa*) *chos-nyid* is coupled with *dbyings* by way of the latter being an apposition to indicate its field-like dimensionality.

the light of their existential-psychological implications by Padmasambhava as follows:<sup>30</sup>

Through the bright luminescence of the moon, the dullness of un-  
knowing [or: unknowing and dullness] has dissipated;  
Through the bright luminescence of the sun, the originary awareness  
of what lights up (to become the phenomenal world) in all its bril-  
liance has spread.

When Padmasambhava then is stated to have related the bright lu-  
minescence of the moon with the individual's function of  
"operance" (*thabs*) and the bright luminescence of the sun with the  
individual's function of "appreciation" (*shes-rab*) in the explanation  
of the meaning of the title of his treatise,<sup>31</sup> this is certainly a mistake  
the scribe was prompted to commit by the fixed linguistic formula

<sup>30</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 133b:

*zla-ba'i 'od-'bar ma-rig gti-mug sangs*  
*nyi-ma'i 'od-'bar snang-gsal ye-shes rgyas*

The use of the expression 'od-'bar, apart from being a literary ornament, with both "moon" and "sun" shows that these luminaries have the same value, even if the image of the moon, because of its waxing and waning, is more frequently used to indicate change, while the sun, because of its steady brilliance, is used to indicate invariance. A variation of this theme, with special emphasis on the sun's light, is offered by Padmasambhava in the seventeenth chapter of his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 25ab:

*sngon-nas 'thibs-pa'i ma-rig mun-pa-la*  
*ye-shes snang-gsal nyi-ma shar-ba-yis*  
*ma-rig mun-pa'i smag-rum ka-nas dag*  
*bskal-pa stong-du bsags-pa'i gti-mug dang*  
*rang-byung 'od-gsal chen-po'i nyi-ma shar*  
*ma-rig mun-pa'i sgrib-g.yog ka-nas dag*

Through the rising of the sun that is (the whole's and one's) originary awareness  
illumining what lights up (to become the phenomenal),

In the darkness of unknowing, having covered (one's luminous being) since  
primeval times,

The dense gloom of unknowing is (restored to its) initial symbolic pregnancy.

(One's) dullness may have grown denser and denser over thousands of aeons, but  
With the rising of the sun, the self-originated *lumen naturale* (of one's being)

The obscurations and veils (cast over one's being) by the darkness of unknowing  
(are torn away and) original symbolic pregnancy prevails.

In addition, noting the last term in each of the above two lines, this stanza is also a hermeneutical interpretation of the compound *sangs-rgyas*, a process-product word descriptive of a spiritual awakening—"darkness dissipating, light spreading"—as already stated in the old Pali canon.

<sup>31</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 133b:

*zla-ba'i 'od-'bar thabs-kyi rgyud*  
*nyi-ma'i 'od-'bar shes-rab rgyud*

of *nyi-zla* and *thabs dang shes-rab*.<sup>32</sup> For it is the sun with its constant glare that most suitably symbolizes the constancy of what is termed “operance,” while it is the moon with its ever-changing phases admirably symbolizes what is termed “appreciation,” a probing and gaining insight. Both functions in their inseparability from each other constitute the structure of the *lumen naturale* that we are. Lastly, in the context of this upper plane, Padmasambhava is stated to have said the following about sun and moon:<sup>33</sup>

On the upper plane there are two sources of light: sun and moon. Since they are the quintessence of the sky they rise as its luminaries in its (field-like) dimension, and since they are the functionality of (this dimension’s) originary awareness mode they can illumine the whole (universe).

Finally, there is an internal logic in the sequence of “dullness, un-knowing, darkness” in the last line of the stanza spoken by the *dākinī*: dullness (*gti-mug*) stands for the merely instinctual and affective; un-knowing (*ma-rig*) or, more precisely, un-excitation/excitability, stands for intellectual blindness; and darkness (*mun-pa*) stands for spiritual blindness.

The account of the tripartite cosmos now continues with the in-between plane, the “world of humankind,” in which there are no human beings as we know them, just as on the upper plane, the “world of gods,” there were no gods as commonly understood. This account is placed in the mouth of two personages: the *mahāguru* and the *ye-shes-kyi mkha’-’gro-ma*, the female, elemental and inspirational, force that is the “crystallization” of the field-like dimension of Being’s meaningfulness (*chos-kyi dbyings*) into its originary awareness mode (*ye-shes*) that, from the perspective of the experienter is the understanding or, more precisely, the *inner* standing

<sup>32</sup> The concluding line of the preceding stanza to the above quote reads *de-phyir nyi-zla ’od-’bar rgyud* with the emphasis on *nyi*. This emphasis on the first member in the compound *nyi-zla* leads to the second member opening the following stanza. Language can and often does play strange tricks on us.

<sup>33</sup> *Kun-tu bzang-mo klong-gsal*, 25: 347a:

*’di-ltar steng-du ’od-skor gnyis-la ni/nyi-ma dang ni zla-ba byung/ de yang  
nam-mkha’i bcud yin-pas/ ’od-tshogs tshul-du dbyings-la shar/ de yang ye-shes-  
rtsal yin-phyir/ kun-la gsal-bar nus-pa’o*

(*rtogs*) of his *Menschwerdung* or humanity.<sup>34</sup> The account runs as follows:<sup>35</sup>

Hidden in this plane's deepest recesses there stands a palatial mansion (*gsang-ba'i gzhäl-yas-khang*), a mandala of sheer lucency which brilliantly irradiates (this plane's and mansion's) coming-to-presence, the self-presenting of a closed amulet box (formed by) heaven and earth. (In this palatial mansion) there lived (this plane's) archetypal Father, the Anthropos (*khye'u*), whose disposition was to become alight, who was all-excitation/excitability, and who was (called) Lord of phantasms (*'phrul-rje-btsan*), and (this plane's) archetypal Mother, (this Lord's) Consort, a lady lovely of figure with a sparkling clarity of mind (*mdzes-ma lhan-ne*), (called) Brilliancy's blaze (*gsal-ba'i 'bar*). In the wake of their mutual arousal and transport by their union that obliterated all duality, a cosmic fire leapt up and whipped through all the spheres of this world system that as the in-between plane (of the tripartite cosmos) was a radiant plane, a presence that yet was nothing. (By this fire) all the particular existents of the phenomenal world as

<sup>34</sup> The reference to the *mahāguru* (the "great spiritual master") is intriguing. We shall learn more about him in Chapter Three. Here it suffices to say that the idea or value he presents comes close to what we would call the *moral imperative*. Knowledge not flanked by morality remains ineffectual and even may turn disastrous. Both he and the *ye-she-skyi mkha'-'gro-ma* have been introduced as the narrators by the "Teacher" *mu-mtha' yongs-grol* "He in whom the limits set by the categories of rational thought have thoroughly dissipated" in response to a question put to him by the *rang-s nang khye'u-chung* "the Little Man of Light who comes-to-presence (lights up) by himself." The two narrators intimate the dual nature of the in-between plane, the one being physical, the other spiritual.

<sup>35</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 23b-24a:

*gnam-sa ga'u kha-sbyor rang-s nang-s nang-gsal 'od-kyi dkyil-'khor gsang-ba'i gzhäl-yas-khang zhes-bya-bar/ yab khye'u ngang-dangs kun-rig 'phrul-rje-btsan bya-ba dang/ yum mdzes-ma lhan-ne lcam gsal-ba'i 'bar zhes-bya-ba ste/ yab-yum gnyis-kyis gnyis-su-med-par sbyor-ba'i byin-rlabs-las bar-s nang-stong-khams gsal-ba'i 'jig-rtan-gyi khams thams-cad-du bskal-pa'i me-bo che 'bar te/ nang-srid dngos-po blos brtags-kyi chos thams-cad gzhom-du bsregs te/ nyon-mongs-pa thams-cad sa-bon med-par brlags-nas/ thal-ba ni gzugs-bsdus dngos-po'i chos-nas rgyu chos blos brtags bya-btsal mtha'-la zhen-pa-rnams te/ de-dag thams-cad bskal-pa'i 'thor-rlung-la bskur-bas/ nang-srid nang-brtags gzung-'dzin [24a] chags-sdang gcig kyang ma-lus-pa rlung-pos khyer-nas stong-sangs-kyis thal-lo// der bar-s nang-gsal-ba'i khri steng-na/ nang-gsal 'od-kyi dkyil-'khor-nas gsal-ba'i zla-ba shar-bas/ gti-mug bag-chags sgrib-g.yogs-kyi mun-pa'i smag-rum thams-cad dus-gcig-tu sangs-nas/ de-nas rin-po-che gsal-ba'i 'od-inga shar te/ 'od de'i rang-bzhin gsal-ba-la/ nang-ba ngang-dangs te rang-bzhin med-par 'od snying-po-la thim-mo// der skal-pa dang ldan-pa-rnams-kyis gsang-sngags brda'i gnad go ste/ rtogs-nas sangs-rgyas-pas skye-shi med-par 'khor-bar 'khyams mi-srid de rdo-rje lta-bu'i skur rgyur-to// de-ltar skal-ldan gang-gis rtogs kyang 'gro-drug sems-can-gyi sdug-sngal gcig kyang mi-mnga' 'ol sarva dharma dhātu a al dbyings skye-ba med-par thim-mo*

postulated by the intellect, were scorched and (in the end) consumed, and all the emotions were crushed so that no possibility (of their re-emergence) was left. The ashes, comprising everything from the particular existents, summed up in the visible, up to (the invisible), the postulates by the intellect with its craving for causal explanations and finalistic endeavors, were given over in their entirety to the cosmic wind. Nothing whatsoever was left of the phenomenal world, a coming-to-presence and interpretation in terms of subject and object, love and hate. (With everything) carried away by the cosmic wind there was an utter Void.

In this utter Void, on a throne that itself (already) was the radiance in what was the coming-to-presence of the in-between plane of the cosmos, there rose a bright moon from a mandala of sheer luminosity which brilliantly irradiated its very coming-to-presence. Simultaneously with the moon's rising all the oppressive gloom and darkness that is (one's instinctual) dullness, (one's organismic) "programs" and (one's intellectual and spiritual) veils and blindfolds disappeared. Then five luminosities (intimating the richness and) preciousness (of this plane) burst forth from this (zero-point energy of the brilliant *lumen naturale* (in such a manner that the moment they burst forth) they dissolved in the energy (of which they were its eruptions). (This is to say), while the (luminosities') own most unique ability-to-be-luminous is (the *lumen naturale*'s) radiance, their coming-to-presence that exhibits their disposition to become alight is not their own most unique ability-to-be-luminous.

Those who are fortunate (to gain such an experience) will thereby have an inkling of what these symbols through which the mystery that is Being announces its presence (*gsang-sngags brda'*), are about, but when they have understood (what these symbol-presences mean) they will have become spiritually awake and, being beyond birth and death, they will be unable to roam about in samsara: they have become their bodily felt adamantine authenticity.

Thus anyone who is so fortunate as to understand/*inner* stand, will not suffer the misery of becoming a sentient being in one of the six life forms.

*sarva-dharma-dhātu a a*

(This glossolalic formula expresses the deeply felt understanding of one's) dissolution in the dimensionality that is without birth.

Like the upper plane in Padmasambhava's tripartite cosmos, this in-between plane, too, is an imaginal world of intense light with far-reaching existential implications. The palatial mansion that stands hidden in this plane's deepest recesses (*gsang-ba'i gzhal-yas-khang*) is itself a symbol of life's mystery, filling us with wonder, rather than with awe as did the "citadel" on the upper plane of the tripartite cosmos of which this mansion is somehow a miniature replica. In

other words, the utter transcendence and unapproachability of what is above all has acquired a “homely” character. But here we are at once faced with a contradiction. Literally rendered the term *gzhal-yas-khang* means “a house exceeding measurability;” but its immeasurability is immediately reduced to measurability by its self-geometrization into a mandala and its self-structuration into a palatial mansion. Its likeness to a closed amulet box strengthens the idea that it is a sort of closed universe, but this is countermanded by the reference to the (immense) sky as the lid and the (vast) earth as the bottom. The main thrust in the image of the palatial mansion as an amulet box is that the latter is a container of something precious and valuable which, in Padmasambhava’s Man-(*Mensch*-)oriented (not Man/human-centered) view, is the human individual in his or her being an *Erlebnis*. Therefore we have to be very cautious and must not take the container metaphor too literally.

The fact that the palatial mansion is not some inert structure, but a live process structure is intimated by its visually and emotionally appealing description as “irradiating its very coming-to-presence” or, what is the same, its lighting-up. In the experiential context of this palatial mansion, the lighting-up is “felt” to draw attention to the in-between plane’s inherent principle of operance (*thabs*), its model building in the contemporary jargon, and its radiating is “felt” to draw attention to the principle of appreciation (*shes-rab*), an insightful relishing of meaning. The cultivation of their unity allows us to speak of this palatial mansion as a gigantic *thought experiment*, and this is what Padmasambhava has to say:<sup>36</sup>

The dimension of 'Og-min, thinking's thinking, the overarching and ever-present [supraexperiential reality], (presents itself as) a mandala that has not been painted, but has arisen by itself in a blaze of light in various colors, (it presents itself as) a palatial mansion that has not been constructed (in the manner of masonry and is such that) from it five rays of light, [the “thinking” whole’s] originary awareness modes, burst forth. In this palatial mansion (that is) the imperturbability of (Being’s) field-like expanse of meanings and the clearness of a brilliant sky ...

<sup>36</sup> *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 277b:

'Og-min-gyi gnas sems-nyid gdal-ba chen-po/ ma-bris-pa'i dkyil-'khor 'od kha-dog  
sna-tshogs 'bar-bar rang-byung-ba/ ma-brtsegs-pa'i gzhal-yas-khang ye-shes-kyi  
'od-zer rnam-lnga 'phro-ba/ chos-dbyings g.yo-med mkha'-gsal dang-ba'i gzhal-  
yas-khang 'di-na

Looked at from outside, the opening sentence of this passage juxtaposes two contrary notions, “the dimension of ’Og-min,” the uppermost level in the celestial realm and as such forming a kind of *extensity* and being part of our spatial world system that remains anthropic through and through, and “thinking’s thinking,” (a) sheer *intensity* that allows other intensities (such as ’Og-min) to occupy space. These contrary notions have to be thought *together* as a single dynamic notion. It is for this reason that (in the vein of Padma-sambhava) I have ventured to speak of the central problem, which is the becoming Man/human, as a thought experiment that, in cosmological terms, is somehow prefigured on a plane “above and beyond” the celestial realm in the tripartite cosmos.

In this palatial mansion of sheer light there live the luminous archetypal Father, the Anthropos (*khye’u*), and the archetypal Mother, the (Anthropos’) Consort (*lcam*). Literally rendered, the term *khye’u* means “a little man” or “adolescent”<sup>37</sup> and the term *lcam* is reserved for a lady of highest (social) standing. However, since they are both presences of a more primordial stratum than the merely personal, ego-logically constituted levels of experience, they are described in terms of light.

The image of the Anthropos, the “Man of Light,” as I prefer to paraphrase the Tibetan term *khye’u*, fuses two different lines of thought. The one is the Gnostic-Manichaeian emphasis on light in general, the other is the Indian preoccupation with the phantasmal in particular. The *Lichthaftigkeit* (luminosity) of the Anthropos or Man of Light (the individual) is over and again emphasised by describing Him in the same terms that are used in connection with the palatial mansion (the cosmic): the “lighting-up” (*snang*) and the “irradiating” (*gsal*) of what lights up. In His case they are specified by the addition of the term *rang* “own” to make sure that both His lighting-up and irradiating are His very own lighting-up and irradiating, effected by His own dynamics. The implication of the use of the same terms for the Man of Light and the palatial mansion in which He lives, is that in His “own” light he also is His “own” luminous world. To a certain extent, these luminosities are “enframed” luminosities: “enframed” as the Man of Light and “enframed” as the

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<sup>37</sup> In order to emphasize the smallness of the Anthropos, small in comparison with the “Teacher” whose “disciple” he is, the adjective *chung* “small” is used, hence the more frequently used compound *khye’u-chung*. An added significance of this “smallness” is that Man/human is a growth phenomenon.

palatial mansion. As such enframed luminosities they are the deeper stratum of us as experiencers of this light. In other words, it is the Man of Light who elicits in us the felt sense of some distinctly luminous embodiment-character that, in the final analysis, is our body as lived. The description of this Man of Light which uses the extremely difficult terms *ngang-dangs* and *kun-rig*, tentatively rendered by “(whose) disposition is to become alight” and “(who) is all-excitation/excitability,” immediately reminds us of Merleau-Ponty’s explication of the “flesh:”

The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term “element,” in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an “element” of Being.<sup>38</sup>

This “flesh” (one’s corporeal schema, one’s disposition) tends to become alight and to radiate beyond itself. This luminescence is intertwined with the phenomenon of excitation or, more precisely, the whole’s excitability. It is not a mere figure of speech when we say that someone “lights up with pleasure,” “shines with joy,” and “glows with ecstasy.” Excitation/excitability, whether nascent or fully alive, is pervasive of the whole, hence I have rendered *kun-rig* by “all-excitation/excitability.” Since in Padmasambhava’s thinking the whole, whether cosmic or individual, is “cognitive,”<sup>39</sup> this all-excitation/excitability is the (anthropocosmic) whole’s growth into its supraconscious ecstatic intensity. Speaking of Him as “the Lord of phantasms” assigns Him a relatively high position in the world of the concretely, semi-physically and semi-spiritually, conceived gods of the Buddhist pantheon.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ‘The Intertwining—The Chiasm,’ *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 139.

<sup>39</sup> The sense in which I use the term “cognitive” has nothing to do with the cognitivism of the so-called cognitive sciences.

<sup>40</sup> The term ‘*phrul*’, being the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit terms *nirmāṇa* and *nirmīta*, may here have been used as an abbreviation for *nirmāṇarati* and *paranirmītaśāvarīn*, designations for certain classes of gods on lower levels than the thirteen levels of the celestial realm. See Willibald Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, p. 191. The point deserving special notice is that the Anthropos or Man of Light spans the “high” and the “low” in this imaginal intermediate plane of the tripartite cosmos.

The image of the Consort of this Man of Light, Brilliancy's blaze (by name), is, as Her name implies, no less luminous than is Her spouse. She is a lady (*lcam*) "lovely of figure" (*mdzes-ma*) with a "sparkling clarity of mind" (*lhan-ne*). In this descriptive phrase the term *mdzes-ma*, meaning "beautiful," "lovely," "enchanting," "alluring," refers to Her "bodily," that is, visible presence, the "flesh," while the term *lhan-ne* describes the luster of Her "spirituality."<sup>41</sup> Like Her spouse, She presents a unique blend of the "material" and "immaterial," the "visible" and the "invisible," the "physical" and the "spiritual."

In the wake of their mutually felt arousal and transport in their union that obliterates any sense of duality, a fire that is both "cosmic" and "psychic" at the same time, leaps up and consumes the whole universe. Nothing of what constitutes this anthropic universe, our ideas that model it and our emotions that value it, is left. Even its ashes are blown away by this wind. What is left, if anything still can be said to have been left over or left behind, is an utter Void.

Before proceeding with the analysis of the in-between plane and its inherent dynamics, it may not be out of place here to attempt to clarify the intimate relationship between the "rain of nectar" that pours down from the upper plane and the "fire" that leaps up from this in-between plane, the one life-bestowing, the other life-destroying. As symbols both water and fire are psychological values, and both are substantial images. This rain of nectar or, less poetically expressed, this water with its downward flow, itself already a "felt" image or "imaged" feeling, "materializes" itself into "red and white" streams. Even if in this non-material dimension "red" and "white" are more of the nature of vector feeling-tones, they are prone to become mixed up with the belief about them as having a material or substantial character when envisioned and felt by the experiencer who, as an embodied being, is (or, at the least, seems to be) an in-

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<sup>41</sup> *thugs*. The rendering of this term by "spirituality" is far from satisfactory, but to render it by Mind (with a capital letter) would be even worse. Its experiential character is intimated by the term *lhan-ne*. There are three different terms to describe the felt luster of the triad of *sku*, *gsung*, and *thugs* that, as far as our language permits, are the proto-patterns of our corporeity, communicative capacity, and (anthropic) thinking mode. The three descriptive terms of the lustrous "proto-patterns" are *lhang-nge*, *lham-me*, and *lhan-ne*, respectively.

stance of materiality or substantiality.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the fire with its upward leap is “seen” and “felt” not only to scorch and consume the experiencer’s phenomenal reality, but also to purify it so that it may shine again in its primordial luster.<sup>43</sup> While the downward flow of the rain of nectar in its “materialization” into red and white streams may be seen and felt as a closure in the dimensionality of wholeness, the upward leap of the fire may be seen and felt as a process of “dematerialization” and an opening into the very being of wholeness. From this perspective, the visionary experiencer “sees” water and fire as constituting the very dynamics of the life that he or she is.

But if this all-consuming fire is an opening-up, how are we to understand the “utter Void” of which the *mahāguru* and the *ye-shes-kyi mkha’-’gro-ma* have spoken. Not unexpectedly the answer comes from modern physics, and the justification of referring to this discipline is given by the account that follows. The utter Void of which the above two personages have spoken, is, in the language of modern quantum physics the “zero-point energy of the vacuum” that can neither be touched nor tapped to provide a source of power. However strange it may sound, this “utter Void” may be a far richer fullness than previously thought,<sup>44</sup> and, more significantly, it is the real formative matrix that by its very nature is already patterned and patterns itself, according to John Davidson:

both in its (unobservable) substructure (which sums to zero), as well as in those parts of it which spin and dance into existence, like bubbles on an ocean, as the subatomic particles known to our present day physicists, and in composite form, to our everyday sensory experience.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Reductionists, whose aim is to reduce everything to *one* level of explanation, the literal one, are unable to understand and comprehend what is not their private metaphysical bias, and will feel reassured in their incomprehension by the statement that the red and white streams of nectar (reduced to or concretized into procreational fluids) are drunk by the sentient beings. If the reductionist happens also to be a practitioner, he may take this statement literally and become a participant in spermiac, orgiastic rites. Again we have to be careful not to fall into the reductionist’s trap of generalization.

<sup>43</sup> A penetrating study of the symbols of water and fire in their Western context has been given by Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* and *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*.

<sup>44</sup> This, at least, was the view of the Gnostic thinker Basilides. It was taken up by C. G. Jung in his *VII Sermones ad Mortuos*. For a detailed discussion see Stephan A. Hoeller, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead*.

<sup>45</sup> *The Secret of the Creative Vacuum. Man and the Energy Dance*, p. 35.

Thus it is from within this vacuum that the in-between plane of the tripartite cosmos “lights up” and comes-to-presence as the radiance of this vacuum. Its coming-to-presence is felt and perceived in a genuine inward vision and perception; a vision and perception that “images” in terms of a within-out, not in terms of a without-in. The first image is the “throne;” an image and symbol of highest existential significance. Generally speaking, the throne is the seat of authority which has traditionally been imaged as the king. In particular, from an outward directed (limiting) perspective, the throne symbolizes and, in a sense, is the center of the universe; from an inward directed (opening-up) perspective, the throne is the center of one’s Self (not to be confused with the ego, an empty bubble). In either case, by their very nature of being a center, orientational points are implied. In this way, the throne assumes the character of a mandala, a centered four, which is the second image. From its center a brightly shining moon, which is the third image, rises, and with its rising all darkness dissipates.<sup>46</sup> The moon symbolizes spiritual knowledge. Its light grows, like that of the waxing moon in the depth of night, from within the darkness of the Void.<sup>47</sup>

Recasting Padmasambhava’s poetic diction and imagery in the language of phenomenology, we can prosaically state that our spirituality is “founded” on our corporeality (our “flesh” according to Merleau-Ponty) that itself is “founded” on the light that is Being in its wholeness. But, when we so restate Padmasambhava’s insight, it is of utmost importance that we again remind ourselves of the fact

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<sup>46</sup> The three images describe the unfolding of a renewed “vision” of reality in which sensibilities and values take precedence over impassivity and nivellization: the Self in its symbolic presencing as the throne already has and is a dimensionality, symbolized by a mandala, and this carries with it its insight, symbolized by the waxing moon. As is so often the case, the granular terms of ordinary language, in this instance the throne, the mandala, and the moon, conceal the fact that we have to do with an on-going process.

<sup>47</sup> In his remarkable study, titled *Catching the Light. The Entwined History of Light and Mind*, pp. 325ff., physicist Arthur Zajonc speaks of “dark light” and draws on the writings of poets and physicists alike. In this connection, the poetic words of a philosopher may be quoted to round out the picture: David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, p. 371:

The bolt of lightning, seen as a glance sent into the sky of the night from the darkness beyond, lights up the sky and discloses its depth. Analogously, the flash of ontological insight make visible the fact that we draw our experience from a deeper spring of inwardness than we had thought: an inwardness which, as we go down into it, discloses to us the ultimate contingency of the subject-object structure and lets us experience its utter openness to the field of Being as a whole.

that these three symbolic images present a unitary experience that ordinary language is unable to express and that is normally obscured by layers of darkness and density. These layers are one's spiritual dullness, or the preponderance of the instinctual and affective, one's organismic "programs," or the sedimentations of experience that serve as instructions for subsequent experiences within the framework of one's enworldedness, and one's veils and blindfolds, or the rational-intellectual take-over that denies what it cannot reify. Once these layers have been consumed by spirituality's fire, the preciousness of one's Being reveals itself. Far from being some obtainable and monolithic thing, this preciousness that we are by virtue of our being the whole and only part of it, asserts itself and shines in a fivefold of luminosities that are the *lumen naturale's* own most unique ability-to-be or, in other words, its *own* rich tapestry of light that makes us experience ourselves as luminous beings. Padmasambhava here distinguishes between the *lumen naturale's* own (*rang*) most unique ability-to-be (*bzhin*), that is, to *be* luminous, and its disposition to luminescence that, because of its projective character, is the source of the experiencer's going astray, forsaking the light (*das Licht*) and chasing after its semblance (*der Schein*). In the jargon of contemporary science, the five luminosities are the vacuum's locked-in potential energy resulting in movement that we perceive as our phenomenal world (and quickly misinterpret). To understand ourselves as pure potential and its unfolding, without misinterpreting the latter, is our authenticity and our life's meaning that is bodily felt and valued like a diamond.

The account of the tripartite cosmos concludes with a description of its "lower" plane that at the very beginning of Padmasambhava's cosmological dissertation had been said to be the "world of demons (*klu*)."<sup>48</sup> But, strangely, no *klus* are mentioned. The agents on this plane are fearsome *rākṣasas* and *rākṣasīs*, demons that live on flesh and blood. Lastly, while the accounts of the upper and in-between planes of the tripartite cosmos had been put in the mouths of female inspirational forces (*mkha'-'gro-ma*, *ḍākinī*), the presentation of the lower plane has no such introductory statement. The account runs as follows:<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See also above note 1 on the term *klu*.

<sup>49</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 24a:

*sa rim-pa bcu-gsum-gyi 'og-na/ yab srin-po Dzālarakṣa dang/ yum bDud-srin nag-mo kun-sgrol-ma gnyis/ yab-yum gnyis-su med-par sbyor-ba'i byin-rlabs-las/*

Below the thirteen levels of the earth, archetypal Father, the demon *Dzālarakṣa*,<sup>50</sup> and archetypal Mother, the black demoness of Death (who by virtue of Her function is called) *Kun-sgrol-ma*,<sup>51</sup> united and from their mutually felt arousal and transport there arose from the points of their contact an enormous cosmic storm that sucked in all the particular existents of the phenomenal world and the various notions about them, and after it had carried away all the dirt and dust that are (one's) notions and emotions, with nothing of them left, all the particular existents of the phenomenal world, mere postulates and constructs of the intellect, had lost their foundation. There was an utter Void (in which not even) nothingness (as having) a center or periphery, regions (of the compass) or demarcations (could be detected).<sup>52</sup>

(The above) is a symbolic presentation of (what is otherwise stated in re-presentational language to the effect that) "the non-existent-founding (*rten-med*) [for the founded (visual) perception] is there as the sky [itself not some some *thing* that can be perceived like any other thing]."<sup>53</sup>

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*sbyor-mtshams-nas bskal-pa'i 'thor-rlung chen-po byung-nas/ snang-srid dngos-po blos brtags 'dus-byas-kyi chos-rnams gtan-med-par gyur-te/ nam-mkha' stong dang mtha' dang dbus-med phyogs dang ris-med-par stong-sangs-kyis thal-lo/ rten-med mkha'-la gnas-pa'i brda'-chos yin*

<sup>50</sup> Seemingly the Tibetan transliteration of a Sanskrit word, no such Sanskrit word, be this *jālarakṣas* or *jālarākṣasa* "a *rākṣasa* who casts the net of illusion over the living beings" has been found in Sanskrit texts.

<sup>51</sup> The whole phrase *bDud-srin nag-mo kun-sgrol-ma* may be understood as the archetypal Mother's proper name on a par with the upper plane's archetypal Mother's name *sTong-gsal kun-sgrol-ma*.

<sup>52</sup> It seems that in the original a word or some words are missing. Hence the "translation" is not quite literal, but captures the overall meaning. The opening words in what I have put into a relative clause are *nam-mkha' stong* which may be rendered by "empty sky," but this container metaphor is in the context of Padmasambhava's process-oriented thinking quite out of place. The following statement by him in his *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 342a, may substantiate this claim:

*nam-mkha' de ni bskal-pa-nas  
bskal-pa'i bar-du yod ma-myong  
med ma-myong-la stong ma-myong  
snang ma-myong-la gsal ma-myong*

This *nam-mkha'*, from one aeon

To another aeon, has not been experienced as (something) existent (*yod*);

It has not been experienced as (something) nonexistent (*med*) and (hence also not) as (something) "empty" (*stong*);

It has not been experienced as (something) coming-to-presence ("lighting up," *snang*) and (hence also not) as something radiant (*gsal*).

<sup>53</sup> In his *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 342a, Padmasambhava expressly relates the *rten-med* to visual perception in his explication of the term *klong-yangs*, an "ever-widening vortex." In other words, "things" can be perceived, but "processes" cannot.

In a certain sense this account of the lower plane and of what happens on it, is both a commentary and a dramatization of what had happened on the in-between plane before the self-renewal of the anthropic universe started. It will be remembered that everything on this in-between plane had been consumed by fire and that the ashes of this burnt-out plane had been blown away by a fierce wind. From the perspective of the experiencer, this is, indeed, a shattering experience that “explains” the fearsomeness of this plane. We tend to cling to habitual patterns of seeing and thinking and believing in their universal validity. Now, all this has been blown away and, instead, so it seems, “fearsome and malevolent demons” have appeared. They are certainly not “evil” in themselves; rather they warn us to let go this clinging. Only if we do not heed their warnings and stubbornly persist in our folly, they become the ultimate terror—ultimate blackness and death, which is but ourselves we see reflected in their eyes. And so, eventually, we will have to face death and looking at it as one of the most powerful possibilities to “feel free” to experience the openness and radiance of Being. This is the meaning of the archetypal Mother’s designation as the “black demoness of death who sets (us) free in a thorough manner” (*bDud-srin nag-mo kun-sgrol-ma*).<sup>54</sup>

There is still more to this terse and yet dramatic account of a tripartite cosmos. This tripartite cosmos is, in the true sense of the word, a *mundus imaginalis* that is both process and structure, but what we here are calling structure is nothing static, but intermeshing dynamic régimes, accessible to us as human beings only through our understanding/inner standing. This *inner* standing places Man/human directly in the “middle” of the anthropocosmic process. Being in the middle, without there being any beginning (birth) or end (death), does not contradict the process-structure’s verticality (coherence in time: the upper, in-between, and lower planes in their

<sup>54</sup> See above p. 43. There the archetypal Mother’s full name was *sTong-gsal kun-sgrol-ma*. On the combination of the two contrary notions of *stong* and *gsal* in contrast with the combination of the two contrary notions of *med* and *snang* see the preceding note. The former may be said to emphasize the “subjectively” felt dynamics, the latter the “objectively” observed reality. From a strictly experiential point of view the two aspects inextricably intertwine. Attention should also be drawn to the word *bdud* “death” in Her name. We have already encountered this word in the compound *bdud-rtsi* (see above pp. 45f.) which quite literally means “squeezing death out (of a system)” and hence celebrates aliveness; here the compound is *bdud-srin*—*srin* short for gendered *srin-po* or *srin-mo*—which quite literally means “death (as a) demon or demoness” and hence emphasizes the terror that is commonly associated with death.

seemingly hierarchical arrangement) and horizontality (coherence in space: the interaction between the archetypal Father and the archetypal Mother), it even endorses it, for it is from the middle that Man/human spreads into and connects with all dimensions. Beyond that, Padmasambhava's account shows that this so-called tripartite cosmos is tripartite only in name, probably in an attempt to accommodate those who still persist living in a static universe based on the number three. It will have been noted that what had already happened on the in-between plane, the blowing away of all that had been consumed by its fire and turned into ashes by a fierce wind, is made into a plane of its own. Another point to note is the fact that the happenings on this (third) plane are not narrated by a *mkha'-gro-ma* (*ḍākini*). The reason is obvious. The *mkha'-gro-mas* as elemental-inspirational forces are expressions of a vitality that is both spiritual and material. This is intimated by the symbols of "water" (the rain with its twin streams of the spiritual and the instinctual) and "fire" (consuming the accumulated dross of our habitual patterns of perception and merely re-presentational thinking). Both "water" and "fire" are alike in being of the nature of the visible, the former, figuratively speaking, the source of all potentialities in existence, as yet undifferentiated, and the latter these potentialities in their differentiations retaining their connectedness with the undifferentiated. The "visible," in whichever manner we conceive it, needs for its intelligibility the "invisible." This is given by the symbol of the "wind" that acts as the energizing force in the forward thrust of our becoming Man/human. This energizing force may well be "felt" as frightening, because it spells death to any and all complacency. Thus, wherever we look we find the principle of complementarity or the unity of opposites or logic of contraries<sup>55</sup> at work. Thus there is the complementarity of the visible and the invisible, the complementarity of the divine and the demonic, the complementarity of light and darkness. And is not Man the embodiment and playground of opposites; is he/she not divine and demonic at the same time? Lastly, while all these complementarities may be seen as the interplay of external realities, there is still another complementarity in which we as experiencers

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<sup>55</sup> In this respect Padmasambhava is akin to the German mystic Jacob Boehme. On the latter's cosmology see Basarab Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning, and Evolution: The Cosmology of Jacob Boehme*. The main difference between these two thinkers is that Jacob Boehme remains God-oriented, while Padmasambhava is Man/human-oriented.

share, which we feel deep within ourselves, and which without us would not even have any meaning. This is the complex complementarity of the archetypal Father (*yab*) and the archetypal Mother (*yum*) and the archetypal Only Son (*sras-gcig*),<sup>56</sup> the fledgling Anthropos or Little Man of Light (*khye'u-chung*).

In the dramatic presentation of these three personages by Padmasambhava we can recognize several influences at work, not in the least his acquaintance with gnostic ideas, specifically those of the Valentinians, without, however, subscribing to their dominance attitude. Thus, with reference to the archetypal Father he speaks of Him in terms of a "primordial Forefather" (*spyi-mes sngon-thog*) and a "myriarch" (*khri-rje*) who may well be the "perfect aeon" of whom Ptolemy, a Valentinian thinker, has spoken.<sup>57</sup> These are the words of

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<sup>56</sup> This rare expression goes back to dGa'-rab-rdo-rje, this elusive personage who hails from Urygan and is said to be "the Only Son of (Him in whom all) darkness has dissipated and light has spread" (*sangs-rgyas sras-gcig*).

<sup>57</sup> See Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 62, where he quotes Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I.1.1:

[There is] in the invisible and ineffable heights a pre-existent, perfect aeon, whom they also call Pre-beginning, Forefather, and Primal Cause (Bythos). He is incomprehensible and invisible, eternal and ungenerated, and he has existed in profound stillness and serenity for infinite aeons. Along with him there existed also Ennoia (Thought, whom they also name Grace and Silence (Sige). Once upon a time Bythos determined to produce from himself the beginning of all things and, like a seed, he deposited this production which he had resolved to bring forth, as in a womb, in that Sige who was with him.

This quotation can be divided into two sections. The first section tallies with Padmasambhava's conception, the second section, beginning with the words "once upon a time," is unacceptable to Padmasambhava. There is, for him, no premeditation on the part of the (male) Pre-beginning or Forefather or Primal Cause (Bythos). His radicalism is in line with another gnostic thinker, Basilides, who is stated, according to G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, p. 258, to have said:

When I use the term "will," I do so merely to suggest the idea of an operation transcending all volition, thought, or sensible action.

In the paraphrase by Jacques Lacarriere, *The Gnostics*, p. 61, this passage reads:

He who is not wanted to make the world. I use the word "wanted" to make myself intelligible, but in fact there was no thought, no desire, no feeling. And the God who is not made the world of that which is not.

Naturally, the other dominance alternative that it was the Ennoia, "wishing to break the eternal chains that bound her to the male principle," seduced him, as reported by Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 31.5.5, is just as unacceptable. On this other dominance alternative see Giovanni Filoramo, *loc.cit.*, p. 213 n. 53. The principle of complementarity that pervades Padmasambhava's thinking does not allow of any dominance by any of its contraries.

Padmasambhava:<sup>58</sup>

The Forefather-Prebeginning of the whole phenomenal and interpreted world, the myriarch *gTsug-brtan grags-pa*,<sup>59</sup> had put on the sky as his garment, had made the earth his throne, had tied the stars and planets as a belt round his waist, had put the fog as a cap on his head, and had made the rainbow his royal banner. In his right hand he held the sun, and in his left hand the moon. He had crammed the phenomenal and interpreted world into his stomach and had finished with it by gulping down the ocean.<sup>60</sup> When he had ripped out and devoured the hearts<sup>61</sup> of all the living beings in the six life forms, all their bodies were filled with bliss. Although he had ripped out and eaten the hearts of all the living beings they did not die, [or: before they died] they became spiritually awake.<sup>62</sup> This is a great wonder.

Though rather scanty in details, the description of the archetypal Mother stresses Her majestic and powerful character. As the Magna Mater She is the archetypal image of “nature” in its dual aspect of *natura naturans* (nature as creating) and *natura naturata* (nature as

<sup>58</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 28b–29a:

*snang-srid thams-cad-kyi spyi-mes sngon-thog/ khri-rje gTsug-brtan grags-pa bya-ba des/ nam-[29a] mkha' gos-su gyon/ sa-gzhi gdan-du bting/ skar-mda' rked-la bcings/ na-bun mgo-la gon/ 'ja'-tshon rgyal-mtshan byas/ g.yas-su nyi-ma thogs/ g.yon-du zla-ba thogs/ snang-srid lto-bar bcug/ rgya-mtsho khrog-chod-byas/ 'gro-drug-gyi sems-can thams-cad-kyi snying bton-nas zos-pas/ lus thams-cad bde-bas gang ste/ sems-can thams-cad-kyi snying bton-nas zos kyang/ de thams-cad ma-shi-bar sangs-rgyas khad del/ de ngo-mtshar che'o*

<sup>59</sup> On *gTsug-brtan* see above p. 40. Here, the myriarch's full name has been given. Indian proper names consist of two parts, in the present case, *gTsug-brtan* and *grags-pa*., the Tibetan equivalent of Sanskrit *kīrti* “fame.” Typical Indian examples are Candrakīrti and Dharmakīrti.

<sup>60</sup> There is a subtle play of words involved. The “phenomenal and interpreted world” (*snang-srid*) is a construction by our dichotomic (subject-object) mode of thinking (*nam-rtoḡ*) that introduces divisions and discontinuities where there are none; the “ocean” (*rgya-mtsho*) is an image for coherence and for the originary, intuitive modes of thought (*ye-shes*).

<sup>61</sup> The implication seems to be that the heart is the seat of unwholesome thoughts and feelings, “demons” in mythological diction. In the context of Buddhist thought, this is rather unusual; the heart is the “seat” of the calm and peaceful deities, while somewhere in the “brain” (*dung-khang*) there is the seat of the fierce deities who in spite of their frightening and angry appearance are never vicious or evil. Padmasambhava's unusual use of the image of the heart may well contain an allusion to Gnostic thoughts. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 88, refers to Clement of Alexandria and states:

“Valentinus writes in one of his letters that the human heart is the abode of evil spirits who prevent its becoming pure ...”

<sup>62</sup> *sangs-rgyas*. When applied in its literal rendering, this sentence would then read: “became such that their spiritual darkness dissipated and their *lumen naturale* spread.”

created)—an idea that in the Western world is found with Meister Eckhart (1260–1327), Benedict de Spinoza (1632–1677), and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854). Padmasambhava has this to say about Her:<sup>63</sup>

Then there is the sovereign Lady of the whole phenomenal and interpreted world, the origin of all living beings, the archetypal Mother, the queen of the interpreted world, the all-ground,<sup>64</sup> the great powerful one of the universe.

Although from Her the living beings in the world are born, they do not increase in numbers, and although all of them die they do not decrease in numbers. There is thus, (generally speaking), nothing that increases nor decreases, and (in particular) there is nothing whatsoever (of which it might be said that it) ceases (to be), gets filled, and becomes voided. This is an even greater wonder.

Lastly, about the Little Man of Light who occupies the central position in Padmasambhava's human-oriented cosmology and anthropology, he tells us in the manner of an apotheosis:<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 29a:

*de-nas snang-srid thams-cad-kyi mnga'-bdag-mo/ sems-can thams-cad-kyi 'byung-gnas yum srid-pa'i rgyal-mo/ kun-gzhi kun-gyi dbang-mo-che bya-ba de-las srid-pa'i sems-can skyes kyang sems-can mang-du ma-song-la/ skyes-pa thams-cad shi yang nyung-du ma-song skad de/ de yang 'phel-ba'am 'grib-pa'am/ zad-pa dang/ gang-ba dang/ stongs-pa yang med-dol/ de yang shin-tu ngo-mtshar che'o*

<sup>64</sup> *kun-gzhi*. This ontological term denotes a "ground" that is a "through and through" ground, the anthropic whole's potential. In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 258a, Padmasambhava gives the following hermeneutical explication:

*kun ni snang-srid 'khor-'das yin  
gzhi ni byang-chub-sems yin-no  
kun ni skye-'gro gzugs bsdu yin  
gzhi ni sems-kyi 'byung-gzhi yin  
kun ni 'byung-snang-chos-la bya  
gzhi ni thog-ma'i gzhi-la bya*

*kun* means the phenomenal world and its interpretation as samsara and nirvana,  
*gzhi* means (the individual's) mentation (as it is directed toward) refinement realization;

*kun* sums up the shapes of what is born and moves about,

*gzhi* means the source of mentation;

*kun* is said to be the visible in its emergence,

*gzhi* is said to be the primordial ground (*Urgrund*).

Since this ground is "intelligent" through and through, it may, in its being an epithet of the archetypal Mother, be conceived of as denoting what in the Western context is called *anima mundi* or World Soul.

<sup>65</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 29a:

Further, in a temple (*lha-khang*) that in its “nothingness-radiance” (*stong-gsal*) is the sky’s dimensionality (*nam-mkha’i dbyings*),<sup>66</sup> the flawlessly self-luminescent Little Man/Anthropos (*rang-gsal khye’u-chung*) had dressed himself in a garment of light, had made the five-colored rainbow his belt, had put the clouds as a cap on his head, had given the wind as his horse a touch of the spurs, and had put ripples of water<sup>67</sup> (as the bridle) into (its) mouth. In his right hand he held a sword and, brandishing it, he cut down and eradicated all mistaken ideas. In his left hand he held a lamp made of sun and moon and with (its) light dispelled the veils and blindfolds of un-knowing/un-excitation.<sup>68</sup> Having drunk the elixir (of immortality) he harmonized the

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*yang nam-mkha’i dbyings stong-gsal-gyi lha-khang-na/ dri-med rang-gsal-gyi khye’u-chung bya-ba des/ ’od-kyi na-bza’ gsol/ ’ja’-tshon sna-lngas ska-rags byas/ sprin-gyi zhva gon/ rlung-po rkad-mas mnar/ chu-gnyer khar blugs/ phyag g.yas-su mtshon-cha’i ’khor-lo bskor-nas/ ’khrul-pa gang skyes thams-cad rtsad-nas bcad/ g.yon-du nyi-ma’i srgon-me thogs-nas ma-rig-pa’i sgrib-g.yogs bsal/ bdud-rtsi’i bcud ’thungs-pas snang-srid mnyam-par sbyar/ nor-bu rin-po-che snying-la bcangs-pas dgos-’dod thams-cad rang-las byung skad de shin-tu ngo-mtshar che’o/ de yang nam-mkha’i dbyings-su bltas/ rgya-mtsho’i klong-du nyal/ nyi-zla’i mtshams-su ’dug/ ’od-lnga’i nang-du bzhugs/ rlung nag ’tshub-mas khyer*

<sup>66</sup> The significance of this part of the sentence will become clear when we pay attention to the fact that all the symbol terms are made up of two contrasting components. On the literal level, “temple” (*lha-khang*) means a room in any Tibetan monastery where statues and other religious objects are stored; on the symbolic level “temple” means “a residence (*khang*) where a god/goddess (*lha*) resides,” thus combining the “worldly” (*khang*) and the “divine” (*lha*). Since the “temple” is the experienter’s body-as-lived, it is because of its latent association with materiality, figuratively speaking, at the bottom of the scale. However, since in its lived experience its “materiality” is dissolved, it is “nothing” (*stong*), but this “being nothing” is not some “nothingness” or “emptiness” (by which the Tibetan term is consistently mistranslated), rather it signifies the absence of permanent structures. Since, furthermore, this “being nothing,” as we have pointed out before, is the “vacuum’s zero-point energy,” it is the matrix of intensity, intensity equalling zero. There is nothing negative about the zero, as intensity it is sheer “radiance” (*gsal*). In other words, the experienter’s body, the “temple” is “nothing” in the sense of being something reducible to some permanent structure or other, and simultaneously a “radiance”—a radiant presence. On a still “higher level” the experienter’s lived body is the “(dynamic) dimensionality (*dbyings*) of the sky (*nam-mkha’*),” where “sky” signifies “sheer intensity” and “dimensionality” signifies “extensity,” in the sense of the non-material, field aspect of our physical reality. Padmasambhava seems to have anticipated this modern notion in his hermeneutical explication of *nam-mkha’* in his *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 342a. See above note 52.

<sup>67</sup> *chu-gnyer*. In this compound the emphasis is on the *gnyer* “ripples,” not on the *chu* “water.” The point is that in this visionary scene no materiality obtains.

<sup>68</sup> The Tibetan term *ma-rig-pa* is usually translated as “ignorance,” which fails to bring out the term’s intrinsic meaning of “*spiritual* ignorance or un-knowing.” Moreover, the term is not a denial of knowledge, rather it indicates that whatever knowledge (*rig-pa*) there is, is not quite (*ma*) what it might or could be: an “excited” ecstatic intensity.

actual and the possible.<sup>69</sup> And having tied the Jewel (*nor-bu*)<sup>70</sup> to his heart, all his desires were fulfilled instantly. This is the greatest wonder.

Furthermore,

(He) looked around in the sky's dimensionality,

(He) went to sleep in the ocean's vortex,<sup>71</sup>

(He) sat between sun and moon.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *snang-srid mnyam-par byas*. As noted previously *snang* signifies that which lights up and *srid* signifies that which interprets what lights up, which means that the phenomenal world is always an interpreted world. The "harmonization" implies the application of the principle of self-consistency: everything must be consistent with itself and everything else.

<sup>70</sup> The term *nor-bu* refers to a very special jewel, popularly known as the Wish-fulfilling Gem. Explicitly or implicitly this term is used as a symbol for the Self. Behind the reference to it in this passage, a lengthy story lies hidden: the search for and the retrieval of one's true value. This theme is first recorded in the *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*, where a prince is sent by his father to Egypt to recover a hidden treasure, the Pearl. This *Hymn* is said to have been sung by the apostle Judas Thomas to comfort his fellow prisoners when he himself was in prison in India. See Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 29. Concerning the open question whether the motifs in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles show "gnostic" or "encratite" influences, see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 197 n. 28. In any case, Padmasambhava seems to have been familiar with this story, but in his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 252a, he turns the retrieval of the Jewel into a business transaction.

<sup>71</sup> In his *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 134a, Padmasambhava explicates the Tibetan term *rgya-mtsho klong* as follows:

*rgya ni snying-po 'gyur-ba-med*  
*mtsho ni chos-nyid yangs-pa'i mtsho*  
*klong ni mtshon-med brjod-las 'das-pa'o*

*rgya* means (the whole's) energy (that is its) invariance,  
*mtsho* means the giving birth to thoughts/meaning (that is the whole's) vastness,  
*klong* means the undemonstrable (that is what is) beyond words.

The ocean (*rgya-mtsho*), literally meaning a "huge lake," symbolizes the "elixir of immortality" (*bdud-rtsi*), as was already intimated in the prose passage above. Actually, this single sentence—went to sleep in the ocean's vortex—sums up a complex program of spiritual growth. It is detailed by Padmasambhava in his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38ab. Here, instead of the above "went to sleep" (*nyal-ba*), the term *'khyil-ba* "to immerse oneself in (the ocean of immortality's elixir)." The movement itself is seen as a spiraling.

<sup>72</sup> A similar image is used in *Nyi-zla bkod-pa*, 1: 104b:

*rgya-mtsho'i klong-du nyol-la nam-mkha'i dbyings-su ltos*  
*khyung dang seng-ge zhon-la nyi-zla'i snying-po ltos*

Sleep in the ocean's vortex and look at the sky's dimensionality,  
 Ride on an eagle and a lion and look at the energy of sun and moon.

These two lines are constructed in the manner of a chiasmus and convey the idea of the *conjunctio oppositorum*—the ocean deep below and the sky high above, the eagle soaring in the sky, and the lion walking on firm ground. Like the "in between" in the quotation in the body of the text, the "energy" in the second line intimates the extension of

(He) entered into the fivefold light—  
 (There was) a carrying away by a black sandstorm.<sup>73</sup>

This brief survey of Padmasambhava's tripartite cosmos should have made it abundantly clear that there is nothing static about it; it is a process or, more exactly, a *process structure* in which the three planes are little more than orientation points. From the perspective of an observer, this cosmos can be looked at as Being's or the

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a binary mode ("sun" and "moon") into a ternary mode introducing an element of creativity in the manner of the whole's autocatalysis.

The above two lines are followed by what looks like a recapitulation and a variation of the symbolism of the Little Man of Light (*khye'u-chung*). The continuation of these two lines runs as follows:

*shes-rab-gri thogs khyi phag bya spre'el gsöd*  
*sgron-me lag thogs mun-pa'i smag-rum sel*  
*'ja'-tshon rgyal-mtshan gyis-la na-bun smug-pa sol*  
*chu-gnyer kha-ru chugs-la spre'u lag-pas zung*  
*rlung-pho stod-la non-la rdo-tshan kha-ba phyogs*  
*ri-bo'i rtse-la 'dug-la ssspang-la gser-phur thob*  
*snang-ba'i chos-rnams dbye-bsal med-pa-yis*  
*de-yis mu-med mtha'-yas rtogs-par 'gyur*

Grasp the sword of discrimination-appreciation and (with it) kill the dog, the pig, the cock, and the monkey;

Hold a lamp in your hand and banish the blackness of (spiritual) darkness;

Make the rainbow your royal standard and dispel the murkiness of (your spiritual) fog;

Put the ripples of the water (as a bridle) into (your) horse's mouth and hold the monkey (your consciousness) with a (firm) hand;

Mount the stallion of your vitality and (be off as quickly as) snow (melts) next to a hot stone;

Stay on top of the mountain and get the polestar (down below) in the meadow.

By not introducing divisions into the phenomenal and (then) eliminating the one or the other

You will understand Infinity.

<sup>73</sup> This enigmatic sentence and its imagery is made intelligible by a passage in Padmasambhava's *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 45a:

*ngang-dangs gsal-ba'i khye'u-chung-gis*  
*shes-rab ral-gri mda' thogs-la*  
*khyi phag bya spre dug-sbrul sod*  
*rlung-nag'tshub-mas khyer-du chug*

The little Anthropos whose disposition to become alight shone in its brilliance,

Carrying the sword and lance of discrimination-appreciation,

Killed the dog, the pig, the cock, the monkey, and the poisonous snake and

Let them be carried away by a black sandstorm.

The five animals mentioned here are symbols of the instinctual-emotional forces (*nyon-mongs*) contrasting with the five "spiritual forces" (*ye-shes*) in the psyche. The black sandstorm is a symbol for the fierce wind that scatters whatever is left of the phenomenal at the end of an aeon.

whole's closing-in on itself, each progressive closure vividly demonstrated by the image of a citadel; a palatial mansion, and a temple. This imagery itself already captures the observer's feelings as he views this scenery: the feelings of awe, of reverence, and of sacredness. Thereby the observer becomes an integral aspect of this process structure as its experiencer. He is the Son, and he "feels" himself as the offspring of that Infinite that as the whole's intensity is the archetypal Father, and of those infinite possibilities that as the whole's extensity are the archetypal Mother. This triad is a visionary experience of intense light. Taking our cue from Gnostic ideas, we may call this unitrinity of the Father, the Mother, and the Son the "pleromatic family." But unlike Gnostic reductionist thinking, Padmasambhava's evolutionary thinking is based on the principle of complementarity. Eventually it is the Son who "descends" into the world, not as a savior (reflecting a kind of dominance psychology), but as the one who has to live to the full his human adventure of self-understanding. In this adventure, symbols woven into an allegorical story quite literally "lead on," simply because they keep alive the mystery that is life.

CHAPTER TWO  
INTO THE WORLD—TRANSCENDING THE WORLD

*Introductory remarks*

With the “birth” of the archetypal Son, the Anthropos, the Little Man of Light (*khye’u-chung*), the scene has been set for the human drama to unfold, for it is the Son who marks the passage from the “Infinite” that is Being or the whole, to the “finite” that is us as its experiencers in an as yet pre-egological understanding of ourselves. Any son or daughter presupposes the existence of a father and a mother and, hence, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the (archetypal) Son is always mentioned along with his archetypal Father and archetypal Mother. “Archetypal Father” (*yab*) who is an image of Being’s intensity, referred to as “thinking’s thinking” (*sems-nyid*)<sup>1</sup> that in view of the paramount role it/he plays in the

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<sup>1</sup> The rendering of the term *sems-nyid* by “thinking’s thinking” in an attempt to show that this term does not imply a thinking *of* something, but only the dynamics of what we call “thinking,” is linguistically correct. Nonetheless this rendering is misleading because of our associations with what we understand by thinking as a predominantly rational operation of *a* or *the* mind that carries with it strong masculine overtones. Padmasambhava’s conception of *sems-nyid* is strikingly similar to the Gnostics’ idea of absolute transcendence. In the *Apocryphon of John* Jesus tells his disciples:

Nobody dominates the Spirit, for it is a monarchy (that is, it rules alone). The True God, Father of All, the Holy Spirit, the Invisible, who is above all, Who exists in His incorruptibility, He is in the pure light, which the light of the eye cannot look at. It is impossible to think of the Spirit as a god or that He exists in a certain mode. For he is above the gods. He is an *arche* (principle) and nobody dominates Him. Nobody exists before Him and He needs nobody. He has no need of life, for He is eternal. He has no need of anything, for He cannot be perfected, for He has no need of anything to be perfect. At every moment He is utter perfection. He is light, He is without boundaries, for there is no pre-existent being to set boundaries. He cannot be judged, for there is no pre-existent being to judge Him. He has no measure, for no one else has measured Him. He is invisible, for no one else has seen Him. He is eternal, which is forever. He is indescribable, for no one has apprehended Him to describe Him. He is the one whose name cannot be pronounced, for there is no pre-existent being to name Him. He is the immeasurable light, the holy and pure purity, the unspeakable, the perfect, the indestructible. He is neither perfection nor happiness nor divinity, but above these things. He is neither boundless nor bounded, but

psyche's "household" by providing stability is likened to a king, and "archetypal Mother" (*yum*) who is an image of Being's extensity, referred to as the "giving birth to Being's infinite possibilities and probabilities in the form of thoughts/meanings" (*chos-nyid*), are always and already in union with each other. When they are further described as presenting the effectiveness principle or operance (*thabs*) and the discrimination-appreciation-insight principle (*shes-rab*), respectively, they are "seen" and "felt" as pre-egological action-patterns within the psyche, and as such they point to a new possibility by making their own presence felt not only in the numinosity and fascination of their respective archetypal images, the Father and the Mother, but also in the experiencer's bondedness to and inseparability from them. This means that He, the Son, is both his parents and yet more than their sum, and that the feeling that holds between them makes the experiencer aware of being part of a larger whole and speak of himself as their son. In this relationship He is, like an actual child, the center of an actual family, always the anthropic universe's center or the "middle" that, as we have already noted, bridges the non-existent beginning and the non-existent end.<sup>2</sup>

We may, indeed, wonder at this apparent contradiction between the "non-existent" (*med/med-pa*), the non-being, the No that is at the center of the universe and at the heart of our own psyche, and the "is there" (*gnas*) that lifts the universe and us to a level where language is unable to interpret and founders on its own building blocks. But when we conceive of this triunely structured "is-not" as pure potential—there is no reason why, for argument's sake, we should not—we can understand how this pure potential becomes its pre-actual, pre-ontological and pre-egological reality of ourselves, spanning the ontological, experientially felt, and imaginal levels of the Being-that-we-are (*rang-bzhin*).<sup>3</sup> Let us also bear in mind that in Padma-

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above these things. Neither incorporeal nor corporeal. Neither great nor small. He has no measurable size. No creature nor person can comprehend Him. Above all, He is nothing of that which exists, but is above that.

(Quoted from Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 60f.)

I have quoted the above passage in full, because it contains too many ideas the attentive reader will not fail to recognize in Padmasambhava's writings.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> It cannot be stated too often that the term *rang-bzhin* is one of the most difficult concepts and defies any facile reduction to any *one* level of explanation. It is associatively used with such terms as *snying-po* "energy," *mnyam-nyid* "(self)-consistency," and (the ominous) *stong-(pa)/stong-(pa)-nyid*, which is a dynamic concept that has nothing to

sambhava's process-oriented thinking there are no absolutes; even the archetypal Father and the archetypal Mother evolve from "sub-threshold" processes within the non-analytic layers of Being. Thus Padmasambhava states:<sup>4</sup>

do with the static "emptiness" of an empty container/mind. In his *bCud-kyi yang-snying*, 2: 267b, Padmasambhava states:

*thog mtha' med-pa'i bar-do-na*  
*ma-phyed mi-phyed snying-po mnyam-pa-nyid*  
*rang-bzhin yongs-la khyab-pa'i stong-ra [sic!]-na*  
*ye-nas yongs-su bkod-pa'i gzhal-yas-khang*  
*ma-skyes mi-'gag ka-dag lhun-grub dbyings*

In the in-between the non-existent beginning and the non-existent end  
 (There is the whole's) undivided and indivisible energy (with its) self-consistency  
 (and there)

In its (our) own most unique ability-to-be, an all-encompassing nothingness,  
 (Has been present) since time before time a well-planned (and well-laid-out) palatial mansion—

(Being's) unoriginated and unceasing symbolic pregnancy (with its) spontaneously present dimensionality.

With the exception of the term *khyad-par don* "a very special reality" instead of the term *bar-do* in the first line of the above stanza, the omission of line four, and the use of the term *chos-sku* "the experiencer's bodily felt meaning of his/her existence" the above stanza is repeated in Padmasambhava's *sPros-pa gcod-pa sde-lnga*, 2: 271b. This text takes up the fourth line in the afore-mentioned stanza and elaborates it as follows:

*ye-nas yongs-khyab kun-gyi gzhal-yas-na*  
*snying-po rang-bzhin g.yo-med chos-sku bzhugs*

In a palatial mansion (that) as the all-ground [*kun-gzhi* instead of the printed *kun-gyi*] has been all-encompassing since time before time,

There is seated (Being's) energy (in) its own most unique ability-to-be, unmoving,  
 bodily felt as his/her meaning (by the experiencer).

In this context it may not be out of place to clarify the difference between *stong-pa* and *med-pa*, since both are likely to be misunderstood. *stong-pa* is a term describing a deeply felt experience in which all stable structures dissolve to make room for new structures to come to the fore; *med-pa* is an ontological term describing, as it were, the No that itself defies any attempt at thinking *about* it. Thus Padmasambhava states in his *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 123b-124a:

*klong-nas rtsal-zer klong-du grol*  
*stong-las kun 'byung stong-par grol*  
*med-las sna-tshogs med-par grol*

From (Being's) vortex-(like swirling) the rays of its creativity erupt and in it they dissolve;

Out of (Being's) nothingness the universe arises and in it it dissolves;

Out of (Being's) non-existence the manifold (of our empirical world) arises and in it it dissolves.

<sup>4</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*chos-rnams mnyam-nyid dbyings-su thim*  
*bag-tsam g.yo-ba yab-kyi tshul*

(When) the thoughts and meanings (that constitute our phenomenal-reality) have subsided in the (whole's) self-consistency<sup>5</sup> as their (generative) field,  
 A slight trembling (in this field) assumes the character of the archetypal Father;  
 A pervasively expanding trembling assumes the character of the archetypal Mother; and  
 A (tremor-like, eruptive) stirring evolves into (their) child.<sup>6</sup>

The evolutionary process, if I may so call this movement of Being's or the whole's closing-in onto itself, becomes ever more "anthropic" in the strict sense of the word. Contrasting and yet thinking together the anthropic whole's potential (*kun-gzhi*)<sup>7</sup> as our ontical foundation and the all-encompassing (open) matrix of experience (*kun-khyab*)—"all-encompassing" in the sense of including everything without being terminated by anything and hence "open"—and expanding

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*kun-tu g.yo-ba yum-gyi tshul*  
*'gyu-ba bu-yi tshul-du skyes*

<sup>5</sup> The Tibetan term *mnyam-(pa)-nyid*, like the terms *sems-nyid* "thinking's thinking" and *chos-nyid* "the giving birth to thoughts/meanings," is a dynamic concept. Self-consistency is, in the words of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 70:

in no way an undifferentiated aggregate of unformed matters, but neither is it a chaos of formed matters of every kind. It is true that on the plane of consistency there are no longer forms or substances, content or expression, respective and relative deterritorializations. But beneath the forms and substances of the strata the plane of consistency ... *constructs continuums of intensity*; it creates continuity for intensities that it extracts from distinct forms and substances.

<sup>6</sup> This passage is extremely intriguing and may well be a further instance of Padmasambhava's familiarity with Gnostic ideas. What he calls "trembling" (*g.yo-ba*) and "stirring" (*'gyu-ba*) is too similar to the "bubbling up" of the Son in gnosticism as not to be noticed. In his *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 64, Giovanni Filoramo states:

Thus Jeu, in the *First Book of Jeu*, the equivalent of the Sethian Son and the Valentinian Nous, describes his birth: "I shone in this small shape as one who proceeds from the Father. I bubbled up and flowed from that. The latter emanated, and in this I was the first emanation. I was his entire likeness and image."

Filoramo then goes on to ask the pertinent question:

Why did the Son bubble up, unless he is the product of a bubbling up, of an increase and an explosion of the heat and fire that generate life and animate the movement of the 'small shape', the equivalent of the Ennoia?

In the "small shape" we can easily recognize the *khye'u-chung* of Padmasambhava. The difference of this Little Man's evolution is that, with Padmasambhava, he descends from both his father and mother, not from the Father alone, and the reason is that Padmasambhava's thinking is not patrifocal as is the Gnostics' thinking.

<sup>7</sup> On Padmasambhava's hermeneutical explication of this term see chapter one, p. 67 n. 64.

this binary relationship (Father/Mother) into a ternary relationship (Father/Mother/Son), Padmasambhava has developed what I would like to call an “experiential ontology.” His words are:<sup>8</sup>

The (anthropic) whole’s potential is there in the manner of the archetypal Father;

The all-encompassing matrix of experience, an immense vortex,<sup>9</sup> is there in the manner of the archetypal Mother;

(From their union/unity their) Only Son, (an) unbroken (wholeness), unoriginated and unceasing, was born.

The human drama that commences with the archetypal Son’s leaving the pleromatic world, in the final analysis, consists of two movements. The one is a movement away from this world of light into a world of darkness; it is said to be a “downward move” of going ever more astray (*mar-’khrul*), which as the whole’s closing-in onto itself constitutes an increasing finitization of the whole’s infinity into us as its finite experiencers in whom the “original” infinity now persists as a most precious, though mostly forgotten, reality. The other is a movement in the opposite direction, an “upward unfolding” (*yar-rgyas*). It is a return to the source from which the experiencing Self has strayed, by “re-cognizing” (*ngo-sprod*) its true value and suprahuman/supradivine origin, a re-union with one’s maternal (*ma*) fountainhead, and a re-occupation of one’s legitimate dwelling (*rang-sa*). This movement is experientially “felt” as a pro-

<sup>8</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*kun-gzhi yab-kyi tshul-du gnas*  
*kun-khyab klong-chen yum-gyi tshul*  
*rgya-chad skye-gag-med-pa’i sras-gcig ’khrungs*

<sup>9</sup> The use of the term *klong-chen* “an immense vortex” or, more precisely, “a vortex in an ultimate sense,” may, at first glance, seem to be rather enigmatic. Bearing in mind that the term *klong* is primarily used in connection with Being or the whole’s energy (*snying-po*), as for instance in the compound *snying-po’i klong* (see *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 21b, 33a), it is pre-eminently suited to “illustrate” the dynamics of the giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid kha-gting-med-pa’i klong* “the (whole’s) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, a vortex having neither an upper nor lower limit,” see *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 19a). However, this stanza expresses more than the complementarity of the “static” character of the anthropic whole’s potential (imagined as the Father) and the anthropic whole’s “dynamic” character (imagined as the Mother). While “father” and “mother” may be said to exclude and yet to define each other, in themselves they are meaningless words—it is the child that gives meaning to the father and the mother and vice versa. Complementarity is not binary, but ternary.

gressive release (*yar grol*)<sup>10</sup> from what has restrained the potential—that-we-are from reaching its full intensity and splendor. Padma-sambhava succinctly says about these two movements:<sup>11</sup>

The upward unfolding and the downward going-astray  
Have been an on-going (feature of) Being from before time and have  
continued from the very beginning (of our *Menschwerdung*, our an-  
thropic evolution).

In simplest terms these two movements describe the whole's understanding of itself (*rtogs*) and non-understanding of itself (*ma-rtogs*), the latter, in particular, being a kind of *Fehlleistung* or malfunction, which is so aptly from an experiential point of view described as errancy (*'khrul-tshul*). Analytically speaking, this malfunction of the whole seems to involve two movements. Actually they are one and the same process, seen from different angles. Because of our preoccupation with materiality-physicality, the one movement may be said to correspond to what we call "phylogenesis" (the species called *Man/human*), the other to what we call "ontogenesis" (the individual called *Man/human*). Padmasambhava's own, rather technical presentation, only occasionally interspersed with illustrative images—which for clarity's sake I have divided into two sections [A] and [B]—are as follows:<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The terms *rgyas* and *grol* are synonymous in the sense that *rgyas* emphasizes the feeling of an unfolding and expanding, while *grol* emphasizes the feeling of release and freedom.

<sup>11</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 208a:

*yar-rgyas mar-'khrul gnyis kyang 'di-lta ste*  
*sngon-nas gdod-ma-nyid-nas gnas*

<sup>12</sup> *Rin-chen sgron-ma rtsa-ba*, 1: 109b–110a):

*gnas-lugs mnyam-pa'i ngang-las 'khrul-tshul ni*  
[A] *stong-pa'i ngang-las 'gyu-ba rlung g.yos-pas*  
*de-las rig-pa rang-sar shar-ba-las*  
*yin nam ma-yin snyam-pa yid-du myongs*  
*snyam-byed 'dod-pas sems-su gsal-bar 'gyus*  
*gsal-ba kha-dog lnga-ru snang-ba-la*  
*'od-kyi dngos-po de-yi rkyen byas-nas*  
*med-las yod byung rigs-drug sems-can-mams*  
*snying-poming-med rang-ngo ma-shes 'khrul*  
*dper-na dmus-long mdun-na gzugs-snang 'dra*  
*med-par yod-snang dung-la ser-po bzhin*  
[B] *kun-gzhi'i nam-par-shes-pas gzhi byas-nas*  
*tshogs-bdun shes-pa'i rtsal-gyis rang ma-shes*  
*dper-na rgan-mo long-ba'i mig dang 'dra*  
*rtsal dang rang-ngo rang-gis ma-shes-pas*

Errancy starting from the Dasein's dimensionality, an as-yet undifferentiated continuum, proceeds as follows:

[A] The dimensionality of the vacuum's zero-point energy is stirred up and becomes agitated through its (inherent) breeze-(like dynamics)<sup>13</sup> and

(As a consequence) a (cognitively tone) excitability/excitation (*rig-pa*) arises (establishing) its autonomy (*vis-à-vis* its enviroining field) and, Wondering what this situation may or may not be, this thinking process is experienced as the ego-logical premise (*yid*);

Through its desire to learn more about this process, this premise quickly increases in luminescence and (becomes any living being's) overall psychic disposition (*sems*).

This luminescence shines in five colors and

In the wake of concretizing (these colors) into (respective) auras—

Themselves being nothing and yet a presence—the beings in the six life-forms

---

*gzhi-la 'khrul-dus lhan-cig-skyes-pa-las*  
*lhan-cig skyes-pa'i ma-rig-pa zhes bya*  
*de-nas nga-bdag bzung-'dzin phyi-nang zung*  
*shing-gi srin bzhin khams-gsum sdug-bsngal myongs*  
*rang-ngo rang-gis ma-shes bsgrubs-pas byung*  
*rang-las gzhan-du bisal-bas gol-bar lhung*  
*rtsol-bsgrub gnyis-'dzin rgyas-pas 'khrul-pa brtas*  
*rnam-rtog btags-chags gzugs-gzhan gol-ba dang*  
*gdeng-med tshig-la 'byams-pas gol-ba dang*  
*grub-mtha'i lta-ba bzung-bas gol-ba dang*  
*spangs-blangs spyod-pa byas-pas gol-ba dang*  
*bsgom-chags nyams-la zhen-pas gol-ba dang*  
*blos byas 'bras-bu bsgrubs-pas gol-ba-yis*  
*snying-po ming-med mtha'-stong rtogs-pa min*  
*'jig-rten rgyu-'bras rtsol-ba mthar 'byin-pas*  
*yang-dag snying-po ming-med rgyang-du 'phangs*  
*cang-med cir yang snang-ba'i rkyen byas-nas*  
*rang rang 'dod-pa'i don-la zhen-pa-yis*  
*yang-dag don-las 'khrul-pas rtog-par bzung*  
*kun-tu brtags-pa'i ma-rig-pa zhes bya*  
*log-rtog khams-gsum sems-can thams-cad ni*  
*dus-gsum gnyis-'dzin nad-kyis rab gzir-nas*  
*yun-ring 'khor-ba'i gnas-su sdug-bsngal myongs*

<sup>13</sup> By rendering the Tibetan term *rlung* in this manner I attempt to convey something of its imaginal quality and value while, at the same time, linking it with images of modern science that, as Erich Jantsch, *Design for Evolution*, p. 85, has pointed out, “does not produce “objective truth”—it produces a human design which orders and formalizes certain aspects of reality in a communicable way.” The “scientific” equivalent of *rlung* would be “turbulence.” On this phenomenon that in the Western world first attracted Leonardo da Vinci, see John Briggs and F. David Peat, *Turbulent Mirror*, pp. 45–51 and *passim*.

Are (the whole's) *Fehlleistung* by (virtue of their) not recognizing what the energy-that-they-are and for which there is no name (*snying-po ming-med*) is.

This (non-recognition) is like a blind person's non-perception of (any) shape in front of him, or

This non-being as some presence is like seeing a (white) shell as yellow.

[B] On the basis of the cognitive function constituting (an individual's) ontic foundation (*kun-gzhi'i rnam-par-shes-pa [= ma-rig-pa or sems]*)

The cognitive functionality of the (remaining) seven functions (is unable to) recognize (its basis) and themselves (as what they are), which

Is like an old woman's near-blind eyes.

This (inability to) recognize the functionality (of the ontic foundation and the) eigen-functionality of the cognitive functions)

(Constitutes) the co-emergence of the ontic foundation and its errancy;

This is the so-called co-emergent low-level excitability (that marks an ordinary individual's cognitive capacity, *lhan-cig skyes-pa'i ma-rig-pa*).

From there such pairs as I and self, the apprehendable and the apprehending, the external and the internal arise.

Through them the triple world becomes afflicted like a tree with bark beetles.

This non-recognition of one's self by oneself comes about by (one's mind) becoming ever more obscured and,

Searching elsewhere for what (is in one's) self, one slips into misinterpretations.

The belief in (the) duality of making efforts and (through them) achieving something spreads and errancy increases:

The error of dichotomic thinking (assuming) something to be other than (this dichotomy), and

The error of indulging in unfounded verbiage, and

The error of (adopting) opinions (generated by the various) belief systems, and

The error of conducting one's life by (ego-centric) rejection and acceptance, and

The error of craving for the moods that (come by) clinging to the images of one's imagination, and

The error of (being satisfied with) having reached a goal set up by one's (ego-centered) intellect

Do not constitute an understanding of the energy-that-one-is and for which there is no name (*snying-po ming-med*) and (in) which (all) limitations are voided.

By (attempting to) eradicate the cause-effect relationship of World by searching for it (as if it were some thing)

One casts the real energy-that-one-is and for which there is no name,  
far away.

By craving for one's wishful claims about the real  
In the wake of (the real's) not being anything but making its presence  
felt as any thing,

One strays from the truly real and turns it into a mental construct:  
This is (the individual's) so-called conceptualized low-level excitabil-  
ity (*kun-tu brtags-pa'i ma-rig-pa*).

(On account of) these perverse notions, all the living beings in the  
triple world (that is theirs)

Are brutally tormented by their belief in duality, throughout the three  
aspects of time and,

For long periods, will suffer trials and tribulations in the stations of  
samsara.

Now let it be stated quite unambiguously that the downward going-  
astray (*mar-'khrul*) and the upward unfolding (*yar-rgyas*) do not  
constitute an enantiodromia. The upward unfolding does not begin  
when the downward going- astray has reached its terminus (whatever  
that may mean where there is neither a beginning nor an end).  
Rather it is already at work at the level that through an excess of  
turbulence embarks on its downward going- astray or *Fehlleistung*.  
This realization stemming from Padmasambhava's mode of thinking  
with its emphasis on the principle of complementarity, puts a differ-  
ent light on the so-called downward going- astray that, at least for us  
Westerners, has rather sinister connotations because of its associa-  
tion with the notion of sin and the idea of the fall of a heavenly be-  
ing and his dispersal in the earthly world. Because of its having the  
same origin as the upward unfolding, the downward going- astray is  
understood as a pointer to a deeper and higher order that is a *calling*  
which comes to us from the wholeness of Being. Wholeness calls us  
to immerse ourselves in its life-enhancing waters, the "sea of  
(immortality's) elixir" (*bdud-rtsi'i rgya-mtsho*), and to drink deeply  
from it. In attempting to come to grips with the non-representational  
dynamics of wholeness of which one must nevertheless think and  
speak, Padmasambhava introduces a distinction—a distinction with-  
out separation, to be exact—between "simile" (*dpe*) and "subject-  
matter" (*don*), on the one hand, and "simile" (*dpe*) and "(Being's)  
binding enunciation" (*gdams-ngag*). Generally speaking, this differ-  
entiation implies a shift from the *what* to the *who*, the *who* being us  
viewed in relation to the wholeness of Being.

About the relationship between simile (the *phore* or *vehicle*) and the subject-matter (the *theme* or *tenor*) Padmasambhava has this to say:<sup>14</sup>

Sun and moon's energy (in their relationship of) simile and subject-matter is as follows:

In the same manner as the reach of the sun's energy

Is also the reach of its light—

Once the sun has risen over a mountain's peak

Its light illumines the visible world with its realms,

But, in spite of its brilliance, the energy in it does not allow itself to be seen—

So also it is with all living beings:

The reach of the spiritual in them<sup>15</sup> is also the reach of its energy

And the reach of this energy is also the reach of the spiritual in them;

But, although all the living beings in the six life-forms (over which they are distributed)

Are entirely pervaded by the luminescence of their (intellectual-spiritual) auto-excitability/excitation,

<sup>14</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 37b:

*nyi-zla'i snying-po dpe don ni  
dper-na nyi-ma'i snying-po-yis  
snying-pos gar khyab 'od-kyis khyab  
ri-rab rtse-nas nyi shar-bas  
'od-kyis rgyal-khams snang-srid gsal  
gsal yang snying-po ltar mi-'breng  
de-bzhin sems-can thams-cad-la  
sems-kyis gar khyab snying-pos khyab  
snying-pos gar khyab sems-kyis khyab  
'gro-drug sems-can thams-cad-la  
rang-rig 'od-gsal kun-ldan yang  
sems-kyi rang-bzhin mthong-ba med  
rtogs ma-rtogs-kyis 'khor-'das gnyis  
ma-rig ye-shes rnam-gnyis-las  
rang-byung ye-shes 'od-gsal-bas  
ma-rig gti-mug ka-nas-dag  
bag-chags sgrib-g.yogs mun-pa sangs  
ka-dag sangs-rgyas dgongs-par gnas  
snang-gsal nyi-ma'i dpe-yis ni  
gsal-dag ma-rig mun-pa sangs  
skye-med ka-dag dgongs-pa''o  
'od-gsal zla-ba'i dpe-yis ni  
gti-mug bag-chags sgrib-g.yogs sangs  
rang-byung 'od-gsal dgongs-par gnas  
nyi-zla snying-po mthong-ba med-pa bzhin  
sems-nyid snying-po dngos-po med  
dngos-por ma-mthong-ba ni 'od-gsal nyid*

<sup>15</sup> For metrical reasons *sems* is here used instead of *sems-nyid*.

The spiritual as such remains invisible.<sup>16</sup>

Through understanding and non-understanding samsara and nirvana come about (which is to say that)

From the two (functional) aspects (of the whole), its non-excitability/non-excitation (*ma-rig*) and its originary awareness (*ye-shes*),

It is because of the luminosity of the self-originated originary awareness that (the whole's)

Non-excitability/non-excitation, dullness,<sup>17</sup> and

Darkness (caused by the) veils and blindfolds of (one's) ingrained tendencies disappear

(The whole's) symbolic pregnance is present as the (ontological) intentionality of him in whom (darkness) has dissipated and (light) has spread.<sup>18</sup>

By way of the simile of the sun with the brilliance of what lights up as the phenomenal (*snang-gsal*)

The dissipation of (the whole's) non-excitability/non-excitation and darkness—(there is only) brilliance and clarity—(has been demonstrated).

(This is the ontological) intentionality of that which is without birth and is (the whole's) symbolic pregnance.

By way of the simile of the moon with the brilliance of what is its luminescence (*'od-gsal*)

The dissipation of dullness and the veils and blindfolds of (one's) ingrained tendencies (has been demonstrated).

(This is the functional) intentionality of the luminosity of the self-originated originary awareness (of the whole).

In the same way as the energy in sun and moon is invisible

So also the energy of the spiritual in us<sup>19</sup> is not some particular existent (and hence not something visible).

Not to see (the spiritual in us) as some particular existent is (to see and be) this luminescence.

However terse this analysis of the relationship between simile and subject-matter may appear to anyone not familiar with the highly

<sup>16</sup> With what follows a further simile subject-matter relationship is worked out such that what has been said so far is the simile (vehicle) and what follows is the subject-matter (theme).

<sup>17</sup> In the original Tibetan text these two words, *ma-rig* and *gti-mug*, are followed by the technical phrase *ka-nas dag*, which is obviously the scribe's gloss.

<sup>18</sup> It is impossible to do full justice to the technical phrase *sangs-rgyas dgongs-pa*. The term *dgongs-pa* corresponds to the idea of "intentionality" as developed and explicated by Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 313–314. Padma-sambhava's qualification by *sangs-rgyas* (usually rendered reductionistically and misleadingly by "Buddha") substantiates Heidegger's claim that "intentionality is neither something objective nor something subjective in the traditional sense."

<sup>19</sup> Here *sems-nyid* is used explicitly. See also above n. 15.

technical language of Padmasambhava, it will be readily admitted that the presentation of us as spiritual *and* luminous beings and the subtle distinction between the whole's *ontological* and *functional* intentionality is unique in the history of human thinking.

No less imposing is Padmasambhava's account of the relationship between simile (*dpe*) and Being's binding enunciation (*gdams-ngag*) that insists on our immersing ourselves in the sea of immortality's elixir. The account, put into the mouth of the Teacher (*ston-pa*) He-who-is-utterly-free-from-conceptual-limitations (*mu-mtha' yongs-grol*) who acts as the mouthpiece of the (personalistically imaged) moral imperative (*bla-ma*), begins with an illustration of what is meant by the "sea of (immortality's) elixir" (*bdud-rtsi rgya-mtsho*):<sup>20</sup>

First let me illustrate (what is meant) by using the image of the sea:  
When someone has immersed himself in the sea of immortality's elixir.

By drinking from it (any) disease will be expelled from him and there will be neither birth nor death.

Still, (this sea) does not dry up, nor does it overflow,  
Nor is it going to be filled up, nor is it going to be emptied.<sup>21</sup>

While this preamble with its rich and evocative imagery may serve to wet the appetite of the experiencer, the actual immersion to which it points, is the experience (*Erlebnis*) to which Padmasambhava has given the name of the "leap aiming high" (*thod-rgal*) and of which he never gets tired to declare that he has actually had it.<sup>22</sup> It involves three intertwining planes in an intrapsychic evolutionary process. These are introduced by way of a summary, immediately followed by an elucidation of the first plane, in the following manner:<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 37b:

*thog-mar rgya-mtsho'i dpes bstan-nas*  
*dper-na bdud-rtsi'i mtshor 'khyil-bas*  
*gang 'thungs nad 'thon skye-'chi med*  
*de-liar gyur kyang rgya-mtsho de*  
*zad-pa med-cing 'phel-ba med*  
*gang-ba med-cing stongs-pa med*

<sup>21</sup> The same idea has been expressed in almost identical words in *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 29a. See also above Chapter One, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> See Introduction, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 37b. Because of metrical requirements the full term "sea of immortality's elixir" is often used in a truncated form; but in the translation I have given the full form. The Tibetan passage reads:

This sea of immortality's elixir, the utterly complete leap aiming high (consists of)

[A] A sea of immortality's elixir that is (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*), unfathomable as to its depth and immeasurable as to its width;

[B] A sea of immortality's elixir that is the dissipation of the limitations of (the whole's) excitability/excitation by representational thinking's constructs (*chos-can*); and

[C] A sea of immortality's elixir that is the dissipation (of darkness) and the spreading (of light) making manifest (Being's) vortex as vortex (*klong-gyur mngon sangs-rgyas*).

Of these, the first [A] sea of immortality's elixir will be shown to be the binding enunciation of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings having neither a surface nor bottom (which is to say that) The multiplicity of the phenomenal has since time before time been nonexistent (*ye-med*) and insubstantial:

(This) insubstantiality dissolves in the (whole's) energy that is radiating from deep within and radiating beyond itself.<sup>24</sup>

This energy's abidingness,<sup>25</sup> indubitable and the real "stuff" (wholeness is made of),

*yongs-rdzogs thod-rgal bdud-rtsi'i rgya-mtsho ni*

[A] *chos-nyid gting-mtha'-med-pa'i rgya-mtsho dang*

[B] *chos-can rig-pa mtha'-grol bdud-rtsi dang*

[C] *klong-gyur mngon-sangs-rgyas-pa'i bdud-rtsi'o*

[A] *de-las dang-po chos-nyid kha-gting-du*

*med-pa'i gdams-ngag bdud-rtsi bstan-pa ni*

*sna-tshogs snang-ba ye-med dngos-po med*

*dngos-med gting-gsal kha-gsal snying-por grol*

*gshis-kyi gnas-lugs nges-pa dam-pa ni*

*thog-mtha'i ming-med blo-'das mtshon-du med*

*skye-med ka-dag dngos-med zang-ka-ma*

*so-ma rnal-ma rang-'khrungs ye-nas grub*

*ye-sangs ye-rgyas ye-zin ye-rdzogs-so*

*ming-med mtha'-stongs bsam-brjod dmigs-yul grol*

<sup>24</sup> There is an inimitable pun involved. The sea of immortality's elixir has neither a bottom (*gting*) nor a surface (*kha*); similarly the (whole's) energy radiates from its bottomless depth (*gting*) and beyond its (limitless) surface (*kha*).

<sup>25</sup> *gshis-kyi gnas-lugs*. In this compound the term *gnas-lugs* corresponds to Martin Heidegger's idea of the *Da-sein* and Henri Bergson's idea of a *durée*. The term *gshis* is a synonym of *ngang* "the whole's or any thing's natural disposition." In *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 21a, it is used to explicate *snying-po*:

*snying-po ma-bcos gshis-su gnas*

*dngos-med zang-ka rang-'khrungs yin*

*rig-med yid-med sems-las-'das-pa'o*

Energy, uncontrived, staying in its natural disposition,

Insubstantial, self-evident, is self-generated.

Having nothing to do with excitability/excitation and having nothing to do with ego-logical concerns, it lies beyond the scope of (one's) mentalistic premises.

Has no name (to specify its) beginning or end; it surpasses the scope of the intellect and is undemonstrable.

Unborn, of symbolic pregnance, insubstantial, self-evident, Fresh, quiet, self-generated, it is a *fait accompli* since time before time.

Dissipating since time before time, expanding since time before time, holding its place since time before time, it has been complete since time before time.

Nameless, with (all) limitations voided, it stands free of (any) objective references that can be thought of and expressed by word of mouth.

If we recast Padmasambhava's often archaic and highly technical language into the more simple idiom of modern phenomenology, we can say that what he calls "the whole's (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings" (*chos-nyid*) corresponds to what Calvin O. Schrag has called the "prereflective-nonthematic structuring of experience."<sup>26</sup> This is primarily concerned with the *how* and its experienced *value* and, ontologically speaking, is akin to the *No* of Basilides as is evidenced by Padmasambhava's frequent use of and insistence on the *med*. In its dynamics it also may be likened to David Bohm's "implicate order" and the impact this idea has had on modern thinking.<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, what Padmasambhava calls "representational thinking's constructs" (*chos-can*) corresponds to Calvin O. Schrag's "reflective-thematic movement." It is primarily concerned with the *what* and an impersonal *it*. Projected into the world, it becomes the whole's malfunction (*Fehlleistung*) that, if left unchecked, is from the perspective of the experiencer his or her going-astray and, by implication, a curtailment of wholeness.

[B] The question<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Experience and Being*, pp. 45–48. His caveat (p. 47) that

The use of the prefix "pre-" in the grammatical construction "prereflective" should not be construed to mean that the prereflective and the reflective are successive levels of experience within a serial time sequence. The prereflective-nonthematic is not serially prior to the reflective-thematic; neither is it genetically earlier or historically more primitive[.]

applies to Padmasambhava's *chos-nyid* and *chos-can* as well.

<sup>27</sup> David Bohm, *Wholeness and the implicate order*, pp. 149–171 and passim; B. J. Hiley and F. David Peat (eds), *Quantum Implications: Essays in Honour of David Bohm*, s. index.

<sup>28</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38a:

*chos-can rig-pa'i mu-mtha'-rnams*

What is (meant by) the sea of immortality's elixir  
 In which the limitations of (the whole's) excitability/excitation by representational thinking's constructs (*chos-can*) have utterly dissipated?

is, in the first instance, answered by Padmasambhava in a rather enigmatic way:<sup>29</sup>

Three poisons, three cul-de-sacs, three enemies—kill (the latter);  
 Ascertain (Being's) three manifestations (and) enter (their) three fortresses.  
 Once the three enemies have been killed, (Being's) three castles are safe (and)  
 Once the troublemakers'<sup>30</sup> hearts have been torn out, (you) may rest in (Being's) sky-(like dimensionality).

Padmasambhava then continues explicating the meaning of this enigmatic statement to be (the whole's) binding enunciation:<sup>31</sup>

The intended meaning (of the above) is (the whole's) binding enunciation (*gdams-ngag*), which is to say that  
 The three cul-de-sacs are the past, the present, and the future;  
 The three enemies<sup>32</sup> are (the whole's and, by implication, the individual's) excitability/excitation, ego-logical premise, and overall psychic background.  
 (Being's) auto-presencing (*rang-snang*), (Being's) being-what-it-is (*rang-bzhin*), and (Being's) auto-dissipation (*rang-grol*)

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*yongs-grol bdud-rtsi'i rgya-mtsho gang*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*:

*dug-gsum 'phrang-gsum dgra-gsum bsad  
 snang-gsum gtan-dbab rdzong-gsum bzhugs  
 dgra-gsum bsad-la mkhar-gsum bsrung  
 phung-mkhan snying bton nam-mkhar nyal*

<sup>30</sup> I understand the hapax legomenon *phung-mkhan* as synonymous with *phung-dkrug-byed* and/or *phung-dre* "trouble-making demon."

<sup>31</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38b:

*don gdams-ngag bstan-pa ni  
 'phrang-gsum 'das dang da-lta phyis  
 dgra-gsum rig yid sems dang gsum  
 rang-snang rang-bzhin rang-grol gsum  
 skye-med ka-dag blo-'das rdzong  
 dug-gsum dgra bsad sku-gsum mkhar  
 nga-bdag zhe-'dod gzung-'dzin thon  
 chos-nyid skye-med dbyings-su nyol*

<sup>32</sup> Attention should be drawn to the fact that the expression "enemy" (*dgra*) covers both the "intellectual" (as in this line) and the "instinctual" (referred to as the "three poisons" three lines lower down).

(Are Being's triune) fortress of (its) no-birth, symbolic pregnancy, and transcendence.

Kill the enemy that is the three poisons and, in the citadel of the three fore-structures (of your being),

Tear out the subject-object relationship that is the passion of your ego and self, and

Go to sleep in the dimensionality of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, (Being's) no-birth.

It will be readily admitted that this "answer" to the "riddle" posed at the beginning of this section [B], is not an answer in the strict sense of the word; rather, it is a calling to experience for oneself what the dissipation of the representational thinking's construct or the reflective-thematic (*chos-can*) holds for the experiencer. In this context it is well to remember that what is termed "dissipation" (*grol-lugs*) is not so much a description as a vector feeling-tone that is inseparable from the whole's functioning and has *no* meaning apart from it. To say that what happens is the feeling of everything falling off, is the closest "description" our language can offer. Padmasambhava's words are:<sup>33</sup>

The dissipation of representational thinking's constructs involves the following:

The lighting-up of the multiplicity of the phenomenal world with its interpretation-possibilities (consists of)

An abiding (i.e., ever-present) mode, a lighting-up mode, and a dissipation mode.

(Here, its) abiding mode is (the whole's) energy, deep and vast—

Unborn, of symbolic pregnancy, and beyond the scope of the intellect.

(Its) lighting-up mode is the coming-to-presence of an objective world

That is auto-presencing, is what-it-is, and holds its own place.

<sup>33</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38b:

*de-nas chos-can grol-lugs ni*  
*snang-srid sna-tshogs snang-ba-la*  
*gnas-lugs snang-tshul grol-lugs gsum*  
*gnas-lugs snying-po gting-mtha'-yas*  
*skye-med ka-dag blo-las-'das*  
*snang-tshul yul-gyi snang-lugs-la*  
*rang-snang rang-bzhin rang-so gsum*  
*de-la grol-lugs rnam gsum ste*  
*rang-snang ma-bkag ma-zhen rang-sar grol*  
*snang-ba'i rang-bzhin dbye-bsal-med-par grol*  
*rig-pa sems-kyi grol-lugs bstan-pa ni*  
*rig-med 'gyu-med sems-med ngang-dangs-su*  
*zhen-'dzin thams-cad ka-dag chen-por grol*

(Its) dissipation mode has three facets:

Its auto-presencing dissolves (dissipates) in its legitimate dwelling (*rang-sa*) when it is not interfered with (i.e., suppressed or repressed) and not hankered after;

The auto-presencing's what-it-is-(in-itself) dissolves (dissipates in its legitimate dwelling) when no (attempt is made) to divide it and to eliminate (one aspect or another).

(Lastly) the dissipation mode of (its inherent) excitability/excitation and (thematizing) mentation is such that

In the (dimension of the whole's) disposition to become alight, in which there is no excitability/excitation, no stirring (due to any turbulence), and no mentation,

All (subjective) appropriations (prompted by subject's) craving, dissolve (dissipate) in the whole's ultimate symbolic pregnance.

Once again Padmasambhava takes up what is best described as the intrapsychic process evolving into the whole's coming-to-presence or lighting-up before, through a kind of misplaced concreteness, it becomes the whole's going-astray into mistaken identifications. His words concerning this triune process are:<sup>34</sup>

The manner in which the triad of (the whole's) lighting-up (and becoming our phenomenal-(mis)interpreted) world [due to] the stirring (or turbulence) [inherent in one's] ontic foundation dissipates (dissolves into the whole's energy) is as follows:

Do not negate and/or affirm whatever lights up, but leave it to itself and

By not rejecting and or accepting (whatever lights up), the phenomenal and (mis)interpreted world dissipates by itself [i.e., loses its hold on us];<sup>35</sup>

As to the stirring (or the whole's turbulence) do not (impose on it your thinking in terms of) subject and object; rather cut off the (ego-logical) appropriation of (what is only) a name (for the cognitive) excitability/excitation.

<sup>34</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 27b:

*snang 'gyu gzhi gsum grol-lugs ni*  
*snang-ba dgag-bsgrub mi-bya rang-sar zhog*  
*spong-len med-pas snang-srid rang-grol-lo*  
*'gyu-ba gzung-'dzin mi-bya rig-pa'i ming-'dzin bcaad*  
*'gyu-med ngang-dangs rig-pa rang-sar grol*  
*kun-gzhi skye-med bag-chags sgrub-g.yogs sangs*  
*snyam-byed rtsis-gdab mi-bya snying-por grol*  
*de gsum nyid kyang cig-tu grol-ba ni*  
*snang-grol 'gyu-med kun-gzhi chos-nyid klong*

<sup>35</sup> Affirmation and negation refer to the mere fact of there being something; acceptance and rejection refer to the individual's affective response to the what-there-is.

Thereby the (cognitive) excitability/excitation dissipates in its legitimate dwelling that is (the whole's) disposition to become alight (as yet) undisturbed by (its inherent) turbulence.

As to the ontic foundation, do not entertain any thoughts or premeditations (about it) and (to the extent) that it is the unborn from which the veils and blindfolds due to your inveterate tendencies have slipped off, it dissipates (dissolves) into (the whole's) energy.

Although we may speak of three facets, their dissipation (dissolution) in and as a unitary (experience)

Is the vortex of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (in what is our) ontic foundation minus its lighting-up and the turbulence (that led to this lighting-up).

In these concise passages Padmasambhava has anticipated Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*, a letting-be, and, in speaking of it as the whole's and, by implication, our legitimate dwelling, he also has anticipated Levin's assessment:<sup>36</sup>

Normal perception, the ontical perception of anyone-and-everyone, is inveterately grasping, as the very word itself should remind us. It is an anxiety-driven, restless intentionality: a grasping *of* light and a grasping *in* the light. But such perception cannot see the whole of things, because wholeness, unlike totality, is not something that can be grasped.

Lastly, is not the sea of immortality's elixir the whole's and our legitimate dwelling where we, quite literally, can feel to be "at home?" Padmasambhava concludes this section [B] with the words:<sup>37</sup>

Through the dissipation (dissolution) of representational thinking's constructs, (the experiencer) immerses himself in immortality's elixir (that is the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings;

When the phenomenal dissipates (dissolves) into its legitimate dwelling, (the experiencer) immerses himself in immortality's elixir (that is the whole's) dimensionality of meaning; and

When (the experiencer's) ontic foundation dissipates (dissolves) into its legitimate dwelling, (the experiencer) immerses himself in (the whole's) energy.

<sup>36</sup> *The Opening of Vision*, p. 234.

<sup>37</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38b:

*chos-can grol-bas chos-nyid bdud-rtsir 'khyil*  
*snang-ba rang-sar grol-na chos-dbyings bdud-rtsir 'khyil*  
*kun-gzhi rang-sar grol-na snying-po bdud-rtsir 'khyil*

It will be remembered that the immersion in the sea of immortality's elixir, detailed and experienced as a dissipation of representational thinking's constructs that increasingly lose their hold on the experimenter, had been presented as the whole's "binding enunciation" (*gdams-ngag*). By this specification two facets of this process are intimated. In its barest outline "enunciation" (*ngag*) involves a "speaker" who, in the present context, is wholeness itself, and a "listener" or addressee who, from the perspective of wholeness, is none other than wholeness or the speaker himself<sup>38</sup> and who as such is already "bound" to the speaker who "binds" (*gdams*) him to himself. To "bind/being bound" is what Martin Heidegger has called *Zugehörigkeit*, here in its double connotation of belonging-to and listening-to. Still, there is still a trace of duality present and what is so present as immortality's elixir is more like a proto-pattern of the fullness of the sea of immortality's elixir.

This fullness is the third plane [C] in what has been called the sea of immortality's elixir. It is introduced by the question:<sup>39</sup>

How is the immersion in (the sea of) immortality's elixir that is the Voice (*man-ngag*)

Of (darkness) dissipating and (light) spreading, making manifest (Being's) vortex as vortex?

The first point to note is that there is no longer any talk about a "binding enunciation" (*gdams-ngag*), but about a Voice (*man-mgag*) in or of a silent awakening, the dissipation of darkness coinciding with the spreading of light that makes manifest (visible, *mngon*) the (invisible) dynamics of Being that is its vortex as vortex. The dissipation of darkness coinciding with the spreading of light is, in the

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<sup>38</sup> The technical phrase used by Padmasambhava in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 62a, is *nyid-las mi-gzhan* "none other than (the Teacher [in this imaginal realm]) himself." The same phrase occurs in more elaborated as

*ston-pa de nyid-las mi-gzhan rang-byung ngang-dangs-kyi 'khor*

The entourage of the self-originated (whole's) disposition to become alight that is none other than the teacher (wholeness) himself

in the *Ri-bo brtsegs-pa*, 3: 2a, probably a work by Padmasambhava himself, even if the colophon does not mention the author and editor.

<sup>39</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38b:

*klong-gyur mngon sangs-rgyas-pa-yi  
man-ngag bdud-rtsi ji-tar 'khyil*

words of Martin Heidegger, “a clearing, a lighting,”<sup>40</sup> and the light that makes manifest (visible), according to David Michael Levin,<sup>41</sup>

does not mean a metaphysical drive to make everything fit a “ready-to-hand” or “present-at-hand” ontology. It does not mean “conquering” the invisible, but rather letting it be seen, and protected, *as* invisible.

Problematic is the *of* in the “the Voice of the dissipation of darkness coinciding with the spreading of light” (*sangs-rgyas-pa*) that may as well be rendered as of “Him in whom darkness has dissipated and light has spread.” In view of the triune character of the dynamics of wholeness, the question may be a reminiscence or a reworking of the Gnostic *Trimorphic Protennoia*,<sup>42</sup> so much more so as *chos-nyid* is always conceived of and imaged as feminine.

The answer to the above question is as follows:<sup>43</sup>

Through immortality’s elixir, unborn (and) the giving birth to thoughts/meanings

The awakening that makes (Being’s) energy (*snying-po*) manifest as a vortex (*klong-gyur*), (is effected);

Through immortality’s elixir, the deep and wide reality that we are, The awakening that makes the giving birth to thoughts/meanings manifest as having a field character (*dbyings*), (is effected);

Through immortality’s elixir, (Being’s) energy (and) symbolic pregnancy

The awakening that makes the unborn manifest as our corporeal schema suffused with the meaning and value of Being (*chos-sku*), (is effected);

Since primeval times one’s mind/spirit has been (a process of darkness) dissipating and (light) spreading:

It is an awakening that makes one’s understanding of one’s reality manifest as a vortex (*klong-gyur*).

<sup>40</sup> “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> *The Opening of Vision*, p. 455.

<sup>42</sup> Introduced and translated by John D. Turner in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, edited by James M. Robinson, pp. 511–522.

<sup>43</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 38b:

*skye-med chos-nyid bdud-rtsi-yis  
snying-po klong-gyur mngon sangs-rgyas  
gting-yangs don-gyi bdud-rtsi-yis  
chos-nyid dbyings-su mngon sans-rgyas  
snying-po ka-dag bdud-rtsi-yis  
skye-med chos-skur mngon sangs-rgyas  
sngon-nas rang-sems sangs-rgyas te  
don rtogs klong-gyur mngon sangs-rgyas*

It must come as a relief when Padmasambhava begins his more “poetic” exposition of the experiencer’s drama, summed up in the two movements mentioned above, by first describing the locale from where this drama starts and then outlining the main events.

### A. The Locale

The locale is referred to as a “citadel” (*pho-brang*) or a “palatial mansion” (*gzhal-yas-khang*), but most frequently as a “temple” (*lha-khang*) that, as we have already pointed out,<sup>44</sup> is a symbol through which the anthropocosmic whole experiences itself in its *Befindlichkeit* and, in the narrower sense of the word, a symbol for the experiencer’s body-as-lived. In other words, the *lha-khang* is neither a spatio-temporal object of one’s ordinary perceiving awareness, nor is it a re-presentation of such; rather it is the self-expression and self-presentation of the whole of Being’s energy as pure intensity or, in the words of Carl Gustav Jung,<sup>45</sup> “the sensuously perceptible *expression of an inner experience*.” Though made up of two nouns, *lha* and *khang*, the idea conveyed by them is that of a unity, not a relationship between two separate entities. This unity is a *felt* image or, what is the same, an *imaged* feeling. In it, the feeling—the *lha* (“god”)—and the image—the *khang* (“mansion”)—are so completely resolved in one another that absolute lucidity of meaning, meaning *par excellence*, prevails.<sup>46</sup> This is underlined by the “temple’s” qualification as a sheer brilliance. As the residence of a divine couple it conveys a sense of a “homelike atmosphere.” This divine (humanly divine and/or divinely human) couple symbolizes and personifies the principle of complementarity through which the whole’s inner tension expresses itself and becomes autopoietic, “creative of itself” in the sense of

Zwei Seelen und ein Gedanke,  
Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag  
(Two souls and one thought,

<sup>44</sup> See above p. 68 n. 66.

<sup>45</sup> *Letters I*, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> In this respect the *lha-khang* is closely related to, if not identical with, the *chos-sku*, the experiencer’s corporeal schema (*sku*) as being meaning (*chos*) through and through. Broadly speaking, the *lha-khang* presents the experiencer’s “cosmic” scale, the *chos-sku* presents the experiencer’s individual scale.

Two hearts and one beat).<sup>47</sup>

“Creative of itself” then also means, psychologically speaking, to be in search of one’s self. This quest can be initiated by one’s being sent away by one’s parents to retrieve a precious jewel or by one’s own initiative. But before going into these details, let us begin with Padmasambhava’s account of the initial situation of which he gives the following description:<sup>48</sup>

In a temple of sheer brilliance, precious in its lighting-up and radiance,<sup>49</sup>

The crown jewel of all the gods, “He-who-is-of-the-nature-of-a-mirror-(displaying)-sun-and-moon”<sup>50</sup> [by name], and

<sup>47</sup> These lines occur in the drama *Der Sohn der Wildnis* (The Son of the Wild), written in 1842 by the German dramatist Friedrich Halm (Freiherr von Münch-Bellinghausen, 1806–1871).

<sup>48</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 33a:

*rin-chen snang-gsal ’od-gsal-gyi lha-khang-na*  
*lha kun-gyi spyi-phud nyi-zla’i me-long-can bya-ba dang*  
*lha-mo mdzes-ma ’od-stong-ldan-ma gnyis bza’-mi byas-pas*  
*snang-srid ’khor-’das thams-cad de gnyis-kyis bskyed-de*  
*shin-tu ngo-mtshar che’i brda’ ’o*

<sup>49</sup> The structure of this sentence is basically associative, not analytic. The term “sheer brilliance” (*’od-gsal*) is, grammatically speaking, a compound of *’od* and *gsal*, and phenomenologically speaking, a process word meaning “the (whole’s) luminosity becoming (the whole’s) brilliance or radiance.” Specified as a “temple” (*lha-khang*) it is the experiencer’s *Befindlichkeit*. In its further specification by the terms *rin-chen snang-gsal*, the term *snang-gsal* intimates the whole’s lighting-up and becoming its “externalization” into the phenomenal world (*snang*), while “internally” remaining the radiance of the whole’s sheer brilliance (*gsal*). But at this stage the “externalization” is still virtual in character, as intimated by the term *rin-chen* “precious.” It is a cryptic reference to the first of three sheaths or the whole’s “closures.” According to Padmasambhava’s *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 71b–72a, this first sheath or closure (*rin-chen sbubs*) is of transparent purity, like a crystal, and expresses the experiencer’s bodily felt awareness of Being’s meaning (*chos-sku*) that is the very meaning of his life. With reference to the *lha-khang*, we can say that, while the *chos-sku*, the experiencer’s corporeal schema (*sku*) as being meaning (*chos*) through and through, presents the experiencer’s “individual” scale, the *lha-khang* presents the experiencer’s “cosmic” scale. The second sheath (*’od-kyi sbubs*) is the luminosity of originary awareness modes (*yeshe*s) as functions of the *chos-sku* through which the experiencer feels himself embedded in a larger whole, “contextualized” (*longs-sku*). The third sheath (*bag-chags-sbubs*) is the experiencer’s (psychophysical) density that prevents the light-that-he-is from shining.

<sup>50</sup> This phrase *nyi-zla’i me-long-can* (in which *nyi-zla’i* may well be the scribe’s or the block-carver’s misspelling) occurs as *nyi-zla me-long-can* in Padmasambhava’s *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 335a, as a description of the “Forefather” (*spyi mes-po*):

*dngos-med kun-gsal nyi-zla me-long-can*  
*ma-lus rlag-byed kun-gyi spyi mes-po*

The goddess, “The-beautiful-one-shining-in-a-thousand-lights” became husband and wife.

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Immaterial, all-radiating, of the nature of a mirror (displaying) sun and moon,  
 Destroying (or: corrupting) all and everything, the forefather of the universe in general.

Padmasambhava's idea of a forefather (*mes-po*) is ambivalent. In his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 8a, he speaks of Being (*gzhi*) as the “forefather of all who become spiritually awake” (*sangs-rgyas thams-cad-kyi mes-po*), but the passage just quoted seems to have much in common with the Gnostic idea of the Demiurge. The phrase *nyi-zla me-long-can* can be understood as a “description” or as a proper name. “Sun” and “moon” are symbols for the effectiveness principle or operance (*thabs*) and the discrimination-appreciation principle or insight (*shes-rab*). Instead of “sun” (*nyi*) and “moon” (*zla*) Padmasambhava speaks of “sky” (*nam-mkha'*) and “ocean” (*rgya-mtsho*) in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 5a, where as a revelatory Voice (*man-ngag*) he speaks of the “relationship” (as we would say) of Being (*gzhi*) and Being's lighting-up (as its holomovement, *gzhi-snang*) on a “cosmic” scale and that of the Self and the ego on an “individual” scale:

*nam-mkha' rgya-mtsho me-long-can-gyi gnas g.yu'i mandala chen-po khod-snyoms steng-na/ rin-po-che'i mchod-rten khri-'phang lnga-pa/ shel-gyi za-ma-tog chen-po'i nang-na gnas-pa-la/ rlung-gi rta-phos bdag-po byed-pa'i man-ngag*

Inside a huge crystal box (in the shape of a) precious five-tier stūpa on a level, huge turquoise mandala, the residence of (Him, the fore-father, the Self who is) of the nature of a mirror (displaying, that is, revealing the immensity of the) sky and (the depth of the) ocean, a rider on a stallion (that is the whole's) turbulence acted as master (the ego-logical self).

We shall meet many of the symbols in this terse passage again later. Here it suffices to point out that “sky” is a symbol for the mind (*sems*) understood ontologically as the sheer intensity of “thinking's thinking” (*sems-nyid*) or, individualistically, though not less ontologically, as a refined, spiritually mature mind (*byang-sems* = *byang-chub-kyi sems*), as detailed in the lengthy discussion of this term in *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 258–261b, and that “ocean” is a symbol for the unfathomable depths of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid gting-mtha' med-pa'i rgya-mtsho* and *chos-nyid mu-med gting-yangs rgya-mtshor 'khyil-ba* [see *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38a]) and for (the whole's) inexhaustible life-giving and life-sustaining capacity, so beautifully illustrated as the sea of immortality's elixir (*bdud-rtsi'i rgya-mtsho*) by Padmasambhava in his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 38a. See above p. 83 and n. 20.

Lastly, in Buddhist thought in general, the function of a mirror is to “reveal,” not merely to “reflect,” and thus is an aid in self-cognition. But this is also the function the mirror has in Gnosticism, as noted by Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 62f. Quoting the Berlin Codex, he states:

“He is the First Father Who has no beginning. He sees Himself in Himself, as in a mirror.” That theme, which, in certain mythological traditions, served to highlight the temptations of narcissism or to take up the Platonic motif of the lifeless nature of the copy as compared with the original, when it is applied to the pleromatic world, seeks, on the other hand, to express the perfect identity of the Father with himself. What reflect him are the pure, luminous, virginal waters of life that surround him, the spiritual substance from which the pleromatic world originates. He “understands Himself in His own light that surrounds Him, that is, the source of the waters of life, the light of full purity.”

These two generated the whole universe in its lighting-up and its interpretation as samsara and nirvana—

This is a symbolic presentation of what is the greatest wonder.

While on the whole the above account of the initial condition for the human drama to begin is similar to the account of the upper plane of the tripartite cosmos, there is a marked difference in its emphasis on the human, nonetheless imaginal, element in it. The imposing figures of a myriarch and his consort, the sovereign mistress of the phenomenal world, have been replaced by the figures of a god and a goddess who are no less awe-inspiring than their majestic counterparts, but who as a god and a goddess carry with them an aura of sacredness and allow the experiencer and visionary to establish some personal relationship and kinship with them. They “behave” like ordinary mortals by presenting themselves as husband and wife whose offspring is the universe of ours with us as their children.

Thus Padmasambhava continues:<sup>51</sup>

Further, in a temple of sheer brilliance<sup>52</sup> that in its lighting-up and radiance<sup>53</sup> was pure-in-its-presencing-for-us<sup>54</sup> (as visionary experiencers),

The Little Man/Anthropos (who was) all-excitation (*kun-rig*)<sup>55</sup> and the real Lord of phantasms, and

<sup>51</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 33a:

yang

*snang-gsal rnam-dag 'od-kyi lha-khang-na/ khye'u-chung kun-rig 'phrul-gyi rje-btsan dam-pa dang/ lha-mo ngang-dangs 'od-gsal mdzes-ma 'od-'bar-ma gnyis/ bza'-mi byas-pas yab-yum gnyis-med sbyor-ba-las/ der yum-la sras rang-byung 'od-gsal kun-mkhyen bya-ba sku-'khrungs-pas/ sras de phyogs-bzhi mtshams-bryad-du nam-mkha'i mtha' 'tshol-du phyin-pas/ de-la mtha'-dbus ma-mnyed de snang-srid 'khor-'das-kyi chos thams-cad spros-pa bcad-nas/ snying-po'i klong-du thim-pa'i man-ngag-go*

<sup>52</sup> I understand *'od-kyi lha-khang* to be a shortened form of *'od-gsal-gyi lha-khang*. In any case, an imaginal reality is intimated.

<sup>53</sup> See above p. 37 n. 93 for the meaning of the Tibetan compound *snang-gsal*.

<sup>54</sup> *rnam-dag*, short for *rnam-par dag-pa*. On this term see also Introduction, p. 16 n. 40. The choice of this term is significant. It marks a change in perspective. What was formerly felt as working deep within ourselves as participants in the luminous quality of Being-in-its beingness, is now “looked at” by us as observers, though not as “detached” observers as an antiquated scientism would claim.

<sup>55</sup> There are a number of compounds in the Tibetan language (as exemplified in this stanza, in particular,) whose first component is *kun* “all” and whose second component is a verb, denoting some cognitive action, such as *kun-rig*, *kun-mkhyen*. It is the objectivist’s fallacy to see in these compounds a verb-object structure. The word *kun* is used in these cases—others will be pointed out in due course—adverbially. Accordingly, taking *rig* as a verbal adjective, *kun-rig* could be literally rendered as “thoroughly ex-

The goddess (whose) disposition was luminescence (and who was) a brilliant light, a beautiful woman, ablaze in luminosity,<sup>56</sup> became husband and wife and (as a result of their) union in the non-duality of (archetypal) Father and Mother

A son, self-originated, an all-sensitive (*kun-mkhyen*) brilliant light, was born from the (archetypal) Mother.<sup>57</sup>

This son went to search the limit of the sky's (immensity) in the four regions (of the world) and the eight points of the compass,

But did not find (the sky to have a) periphery or a center, and having cut off all preconceived notions concerning the phenomenal and its interpretation in terms of samsara and nirvana [he returned home].

This is Being's (revelatory) Voice:<sup>58</sup> immerse (yourself) in the vortex of (the whole's) energy.

The above account does not say anything about what the seeker has been looking for when he roamed the regions. It is left to the reader or listener to imagine for himself what this might be, since there might be more to the archetypal son's quest than the intellectual and

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citable" (bearing in mind that *ma-rig-pa* means "un-excited," "un-knowing," synonymous with *gti-mug* "dullness"). Similarly *kun-mkhyen* could be rendered as "thoroughly sensitive to."

<sup>56</sup> All the Tibetan terms—*ngang-dangs*, 'od-gsal, *mdzes-ma*, 'od-'bar-ma—carry with them the idea of light.

<sup>57</sup> The whole passage beginning with "The Little Man/Anthropos" and ending with "(archetypal) Mother" is intriguing and the possibility that the scribe and/or block-carver was confused about the technical terms *khye'u* "Man/Anthropos" and *khye'u-chung* "Little Man/Anthropos," cannot be excluded, all the more so as *khye'u-chung* is used more frequently than *khye'u*. Apart from the fact that Padmasambhava does not and cannot subscribe to the all-male ideology of the Gnostics about the Triad, this presentation bears comparison with what Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 63, has to say regarding the Father:

In the *Three Stelae of Seth* he is Father through a Father, a unity that comes from a unity through a unity, a word that proceeds from a command. Self-generated and thrice male to indicate the triple male potential present in the Triad, which is manifested in him, he is the First Man, or rather the complete, determined manifestation of the original Anthropos ...

<sup>58</sup> This rendering of the Tibetan term *man-ngag* attempts to convey some idea of what is intended. The term refers to wholeness itself as "speaking," not to some verbal discourse. There are three related presentations of that which is of an experienter's existential concern: (a) *rgyud*, any written or verbal communication, commonly known by its Sanskrit term "Tantra" (that in the Western context has become a shorthand expression or melting pot for mostly sexual notions and practices); (b) *lung*, a teacher-disciple interaction; and (c) *man-ngag*. While *rgyud* may be said to lay the groundwork for an individual's search for spiritual maturity, and *lung* may be said to give the searcher the necessary encouragement by bolstering his confidence in himself and in his work, *man-ngag* is the individual's "self-realization and self-transcendence." A lengthy discussion of these three topics is given by Padmasambhava in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 63b-69b.

intuitive realization that Being's immensity, likened to the infinitude of the sky, cannot be geometrically accessed. In more explicit terms Padmasambhava concludes the triadic account of the pre-condition for the quest, the actual quest, and the successful conclusion of the quest with the words:<sup>59</sup>

Further,

This son, a sheer brilliance, all-sensitive, cut off all (preconceived) notions and,

Finding no place where he might go, returned (home).

Afraid that a terrifying enemy might take away [his precious jewel]

He did not travel about (again), but clung to his wish-fulfilling jewel (*nor-bu*) and stayed home.

Without entertaining an ardent desire to find and achieve something,

All his wants were automatically gratified.

Having dismissed all (preoccupations with) what to do, what had to be done was already done;

Without looking for something to do and effecting what one had been searching, one's existential values had become a reality.

(The fact that) by understanding (one's) existential reality (that has been there) since time before time, expectations and apprehensions are completely eradicated.

This is an allegorical presentation of (Being's) mystery (summed up by the) code term "in-formation singularity" (*thig-le nyag-gcig*).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 33a:

*yang*

*sras 'od-gsal kun-mkhyen spros-gcod-kyis*

*'gro-sa ma-rnyed slar log ste*

*'jigs-pa'i dgra-yis khyer-gyis dogs*

*rgyu-'grul ma-byas-par yid-bzhin-gyi nor-bu bcangs-nas khyim-du sdad-pas/ rtsol-*

*bsgrub zhe-'dod-bya ma-dgos-par/ dgos-'dod thams-cad shugs-las byung*

*bya-ba thams-cad gtang-bas las-rnams zin/*

*bya-btsal rtsol-bsgrub med-pas don-rnams grub/*

*ye-nas don rtogs re-dogs rtsad-nas gcad*

*thig-le nyag-gcig gsang-ba'i brda' mchis yin*

<sup>60</sup> This term has been explicated by way of other codes in *Kun-tu bzang-mo klong-gsal*, 25: 372b, in the following stanza:

*thig ni chos-sku ka-dag-go*

*le ni longs-sku rang-snang-ngo*

*nyag ni sprul-sku kun-khyab-bo*

*gcig ni sku-gsum'du-'bral-med*

*thig* means the "meaning-structure" [of the experiencer's bodily felt meaning of his very being] that is (the whole's) symbolic pregnancy;

*le* means the "sociality-structure" [of the experiencer's bodily felt embeddedness in a larger whole] that is (the whole's) auto-manifestation in having a field-character;

Who is this “terrifying enemy” the Little Man/Anthropos fears he may rob him of his treasure? It is the ego or self.<sup>61</sup> In the form of a highly dramatic dialogue between the *rin-chen mkha’-’gro-ma*, the quintessential female elemental-spiritual force in the psyche’s “gem” resonance domain (*rin-chen rigs*), and the *las-kyi mkha’-’gro-ma*, the quintessential female elemental-spiritual force in the psyche’s “action” resonance domain (*las-kyi rigs*),<sup>62</sup> the strength of this enemy and the manner of how to deal with him is vividly described by Padmasambhava. Significantly he lets the *las-kyi mkha’-’gro-ma* go into the details of dealing with the enemy; after all, a lot of action is involved and she can truly be said to speak from experience. Padmasambhava’s words are:<sup>63</sup>

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*nyag* means the “spirituality-structure” [of the experiencer’s bodily felt interaction with the world] that is (the whole’s) omnipresence; and  
*gcig* means that these three structures are not (entities that) can be added up or subtracted.

The structural aspect(s) (*sku*) of the whole’s (Being’s) dynamics or “energy” (*snying-po*), as explicitly stated by Padmasambhava in his *sPros-pa gcod-pa sde-nga*, 2: 271b, are experiences expressed in a specific form—in-formation in the true sense.

<sup>61</sup> The Tibetan *nga-bdag* needs a few words of explanation in view of the fact that the rendering of *bdag* by “self” can be easily misleading. Within the strictly Buddhist context, the term *bdag* contains a critique of the Brahmanical *ātman* concept. Neither the Sanskrit nor the English language has a term corresponding to the Tibetan *bdag-nyid* that is quite different in connotation from *bdag*. The only way for us to differentiate between *bdag* and *bdag-nyid* is to speak of the former as the inauthentic self and of the latter as the authentic Self. The authentic Self was never denied by the Buddhists, only the inauthentic self that poses as the authentic Self. This is what is meant by the “no-self” (*bdag-med*, *anātman*). The clearest exposition of this problem has been given by David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, p. 462:

The ego is the self limited to its social identifications: its roles, practices, and socially adaptive routines. The ego is the active pole in a structure of subject and object. The self, however, is not identified with any one structure; structurally speaking, it is a process always open to further structuring. Even when the self functions like an ego, it is not totally identified with it. The self is a sense of living in which all identifications are subject to deconstruction. Thus we may say that *there is no self* in the sense of a substance, a fixed identity, and a rigid closure to processes of change. Instead, there are only different styles, types, and dimensions of experiencing—and different styles, types, and dimensions of integration, unity and coherence.

<sup>62</sup> On the imaginal level of reality the human individual presents a complex pattern of “resonance domains” (*rigs*), which means that the individual’s body-as-lived resembles a commonwealth of functions under a unifying management. For details see Herbert Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, pp. 62–75.

<sup>63</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 26a–27a:

*de-nas rin-chen gsal-ba’i mkha’-’gro-mas las-kyi mkha’-’gro-ma-la zhus-pa/ sems-can thams-cad-la gnod-pa’i dgra de ni gang lags/ de’i srog-rtsa ji-ltar bcad/ dgra*

The radiant *rin-chen mkha'*-*'gro-ma* asked the *las-kyi mkha'*-*'gro-ma*:  
Who is the enemy who harms all sentient beings? How is this enemy's vein of life cut? How many such enemies are there? Where are the roots of these enemies? Do they have a leader or not? If they have, how is he brought under control?

The *las-kyi mkha'*-*'gro-ma* answered:

The enemy who harms and torments all sentient beings is the five poisons.<sup>64</sup> The (total) number of these enemies is the eighty-four thousand emotions. Their roots lie in the demon (called) an I and a Self. The leader of these enemies is the (triad of) un-knowing, irritation, and passion. The vein of life of these enemies is cut in the dimension that is the unborn (*skye-ba med-pa*).

Again the *rin-chen mkha'*-*'gro-ma* asked:

Is this enemy's vein of life literally cut?

*de* [26b]-*la rnam-grangs du mchis/ dgra de'i rtsa-ba gang-du mchis/ dgra de-la jo-bo yod-dam med/ yod-na dgra de'i jo-bo ji-ltar 'dul/ zhes zhus-pa dang/ las-kyi mkha'-'gro-mas lan gsungs-pa/ sems-can thams-cad-la gnod cing 'tshe-ba'i dgra ni dug-lnga lags-so/ dgra de'i grangs ni nyon-mongs brgyad-khri-bzhi-stong lags-so/ dgra de'i rtsa-ba ni 'gong-po nga-bdag-tu 'dus-so/ dgra de'i jo-bo ni ma-rig-pa zhe 'dod lags-so/ dgra de'i srog-rtsa ni skye-ba med-par gcod-do/ zhes gsungs-so/ yang rin-chen mkha'-'gro-mas zhus-pa/ dgra de'i srog-rtsa bcad lags-sam/ zhes zhus-pa dang/ las-kyi mkha'-'gro-mas lan gsungs-pa/ dgra de'i srog-rtsa bcad mi-dgos te/ dgra de'i rtsa-ba nga-bdag chod-pas 'chi'o/ zhes gsungs-so/ yang rin-chen mkha'-'gro-mas zhus-pa/ nga-bdag srog-rtsa ji-ltar bcad/ srog-gcod bshan-pa gang-gis bgyi/ srog-rtsa bcad-thabs ji-ltar bcad/ dgra de'i jo-bo gang-gis 'dul/ zhes zhus-pa dang/ las-kyi mkha'-'gro-mas bka'-sts'al-ba/ dgra de'i srog-gcod gshed-ma ni rang-byung rang-grol bshan-pa-yis mu-mtha'-yas-pa'i grogs btsal-nas skye-med ka-dag dpung bcas te shes-rab ral-gri'i mtshon khyer-la mun-snang gnyis-kyi so-mtshams-su 'phrang gsum bcad-nas mkhar-sgo'i nang yid-'khor-gsum-gyi khang-pa-na dgra-bo nga-bdag 'dug-pa-la rang-byung ngang-dangs bshan-pa-yis shes-rab ral-gris ske bcad de rdo-rje lcags-kyus snying bton-nas ma-rig nga-bdag srog bcad-pas skye-shi rtsad-chod dbyings-su thim ka-dag 'od-gsal klong-na gnas sku-gsum lhun-grub dpa'-bo-yis jo-bo zhe 'dod srog-rtsa bcad de-ltar dgra-rnams srog chod-pas skye-med ka-dag zang-kar 'gyur byar-med blo-'das dbyings-su thim chos-can rig-pa'i mu-mtha'-grol [27a] chos-nyid gting-mtha'-yangs-pa ste ming-med mtha'-stongs klong-du gyur/ zhes gsungs-so*

<sup>64</sup> These are spiritual un-knowing, irritability, passionate desires, envy, and jealousy.

The *las-kyi mkha'-'gro-ma* answered:

This enemy's vein of life need not be cut (literally), it is cut when the notion of an I and a Self is eradicated.

Again the *rin-chen mkha'-'gro-ma* asked:

How is the vein of life (called) an I and a Self cut? Which butcher cuts this vein? How does he cut it? Who brings the (enemies') leader under control?

The *las-kyi mkha'-'gro-ma* answered:

The executioner who cuts this enemy's vein of life

Is the butcher who is the self-originated and self-divesting,<sup>65</sup>

He enlisted the unlimited<sup>66</sup> as his helper and

Assembled an army (consisting of Being's) unborn (dimension) and (Being's) symbolic pregnancy;

Taking along the sword of discrimination-appreciation,

He abolished the three cul-de-sacs<sup>67</sup> in the no man's land between darkness and brightness and,

Inside the entrance to a castle,<sup>68</sup>

In a room (harboring the) three functions of the ego-logical mind,<sup>69</sup>

There sat this enemy of an I and Self.

The butcher, self-originated and thoroughly luminescent,

Cut (the enemy's) throat with the sword of discrimination-appreciation,

<sup>65</sup> The term *rang-grol* is extremely difficult to render in any Western language. It describes a vector feeling-tone that is inseparable from the process. In this process anything that might impede its "free" flow falls off and dissolves *by itself*. The whole phrase "self-originated and self-divesting" refers to the Little Man/Anthropos, the larval stage of one's humanity.

<sup>66</sup> The term *mu-mtha'-yas-pa* is ambiguous in usage. In this allegorical context it may be synonymous with *mu-mtha'-yongs-grol*, the descriptive name of the "teacher" who answers the questions put to him by the Little Man/Anthropos (*khye'u-chung*). It also may be a contraction of the term *mu-med mtha'-yas* that figures prominently in Padmasambhava's *Nyi-zla bkod-pa*, 1: 104a.

<sup>67</sup> *'phrang* or *phrang* (the spelling varies) denotes a narrow road that leads nowhere near one's desired destination. In the context here it refers to the three ego-logically circumscribed realms of meditation: the realm of desires, the realm of aesthetic forms, and the realm of no-form.

<sup>68</sup> *mkhar*. Strictly speaking, this term refers to the uppermost part of the whole building, where there are the living quarters of the owners. Below this part are the lodgings for the servants and the stables. The *mkhar* thus denotes a very "private" world.

<sup>69</sup> In his *bCud-kyi yang-snying*, 2: 268a, Padmasambhava explains the three functions of the ego-logical mind as an "overall searching" (*kun-tu tshol-ba*), a "determining" (*gtan-la 'bebs-pa*), and a "creating an *idée fixe*" (*nges-par'jog-pa*). Inasmuch as the ego-logical mind (*yid*) is itself a malfunctioning of the whole's cognitive intensity (*rig-pa*) it becomes ever more deeply involved with its own "materializations" assuming greater and greater densities: the concrete shape of its intensity (*rig-pa'i gzugs*), the concrete shape of its luminosity (*'od-kyi gzugs*), and the concrete shape of the "flesh" (*sha'i gzugs*).

Tore out (the enemy's) heart with an adamantine hook<sup>70</sup> and  
 Destroyed (the enemy's) life that is (one's) un-knowing, the sense  
 of an I and Self,  
 He submerged in the dimension where birth and death do absolutely  
 not exist, and  
 (Continued) abiding in the vortex of the sheer brilliance that is  
 (Being's) symbolic pregnancy.  
 When this hero who is the spontaneous presence of the three exist-  
 ential norms,<sup>71</sup>  
 Had cut the vein of life of (the enemies') leader, (his own spiritual  
 un-knowing), irritability, and passionate desire,  
 He had destroyed the life of all the other enemies and  
 Become (Being's) no-birth, (Being's) symbolic pregnancy, and  
 (Being's) dynamic nothingness.  
 He subsided in the dimension in which there is nothing to do (on  
 purpose) and which lies beyond the (purposing) intellect.  
 All the logical constructs (*chos-can*), limitations (imposed on a)  
 supraconscious ecstatic intensity, had dissolved and  
 There prevailed the immense depth and vastness of (Being's) giving  
 birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*):  
 He had become the vortex of the no-name (in which all) limitations  
 had been voided (*ming-med mtha'-stongs*).<sup>72</sup>

In this account of a deeply felt visionary experience two contrasting images that, to be more precise, are *felt* images or, what is the same, imaged *feelings*, deserve special attention. The one is the "castle" (*mkhar*), the other is the "no-name," the "name-that-is-not" (*ming-med*). Since the latter somehow "antedates" any beginning and makes any ending a meaningless proposition, we may attempt an elucidation of it before turning to the "castle."

The "no-name" goes to the very heart of the problem of one's *Menschwerdung* (one's becoming human) which, as the word itself intimates, is a process. Because of its underlying anthropic perspective, this problem is inextricably intertwined with the problem of the evolving human being's becoming enworlded in what is always a

<sup>70</sup> The "sword" (*ral-gri*) and the "adamantine hook" (*rdo-rje lcags-kyu*) are images for the discrimination-appreciation principle (*shes-rab*) and the effectiveness principle (*thabs*), working in unison.

<sup>71</sup> These are the well-known *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku*: the pattern of the meaning-that-we-are, the pattern of our contextuality, and the pattern of our spiritual involvement in our world.

<sup>72</sup> "The nameless (in which all) limitations had been voided" is one of the key notions along with the "unlimited" (*mu-mtha'-yas-pa*, *mu-med mtha'-yas*) in the *Nyi-zla bkod-pa*, 1: 104a.

human world. For Padmasambhava this problem is of particular importance, because unlike in other cosmogonies and creation myths that “begin” with something to be fashioned or with some artificer, there is for him no beginning except in the sense that sometime and somewhere we start talking about something, which is to say that there is a (or some) logical beginning, but not a historical one. Consequently, he does not begin his explication of the problem of becoming human and becoming enworlded with the apodictic statement of “in the beginning was ...,” but with the challenge of a “before there was ...,”<sup>73</sup> which he goes to elaborate as meaning “before there was any name” (*ming-med*)<sup>74</sup> or “before any naming was done.”<sup>75</sup> As a matter of fact, he is credited to have gone so far as to say:<sup>76</sup>

A name [or: naming], indeed, I declare to be the matrix of errancy, and since errancy is tied to the fragmentizing activity of rational-representational thought, the hurdle that is set up by it, has to be left over:<sup>77</sup>

I declare that, since the playful presencing of the branchings<sup>78</sup> of (Being’s) self-originated auto-functionality in

<sup>73</sup> There are two related terms to express this idea of a “before:” *sngon-rol- (na)* and *sngon-thog*. The former is used with verbs, the latter with nouns.

<sup>74</sup> Literally *ming-med* means “the name-that-is-not” and is formed like *gzhi-med* “the ground-that-is-not.” Both *gzhi-med* and *ming-med* are used contrastingly in *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 31a:

*gzhi-med* 'khrul-med blo-yi yul-las-'das  
*ming-med* bsam-brjod blo-yi dmigs-pa'i spyod-yul grol

The ground-that-is-not, (in which) errancy is not, surpasses the scope of rational thought;

The name-that-is-not (stands) free of the intellect’s referential field of (ego-logical) thoughts and words (expressing them).

<sup>75</sup> Two phrases express this idea: *sngon-rol ming ma-thogs* (*sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 339b) and *ming ma-thogs-kyi sngon-rol-na* (*sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 334b).

<sup>76</sup> *Kun-tu bzang-mo klong-gsal*, 25: 345b:

*ming yang* 'khrul-pa'i gzhi-mar bshad.

<sup>77</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 30b:

*sngon-thog ming-med chos-nyid skye-med-la*  
*rang-byung rang-rtal yan-lag rol-pa'i chos*  
*blos brtags* 'khrul-pa yin-pas la zlo bshad.

<sup>78</sup> In his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 85b, Padmasambhava explicates this term as meaning the proliferation of logical constructs concerning what something is (supposed) to be (*yan-lag gang yin-pa 'phros-pa'i chos-can-no*).

The no-birth (that is Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (for which) in its pre-beginning there was no name,

Is, when fragmented by rational-representational thought, the (reason for one's going astray; this hurdle (set up by it) has to be left over.<sup>79</sup>

But, then, what is this absolute nothingness (*cang-med*) which one must nevertheless think of and which "before a name was put on it was uncompromised by any propositions about it?"<sup>80</sup> Here Padma-sambhava has to temper his radicalness, first by stating that this nothingness is itself the whole's symbolic mode (*brda'*),<sup>81</sup> and then by lifting the totality of the world to the level of the imaginal and symbolic. In this connection the words of Basarab Nicolescu are worth quoting.<sup>82</sup>

The symbol is a marvelous living organism which helps us read the world. It never has an ultimate or exclusive meaning. Its precision consists just in this fact, that it is capable of embracing an unlimited number of aspects of reality. We are thus obliged to accept the relativity of our way of looking at it: this relativity can be present only if the symbol is conceived of as in movement and if we ourselves experience it. Symbolism entails a decreasing entropy of language, a growing order, an augmentation of information and comprehension, as it crosses different levels of reality.

### B. The Mission

We may now turn to the "castle" (*mkhar*) that comes at the end of a series of "closures"—a citadel, a palatial mansion, a temple, and now, a castle as the locale from which the journey into the unknown starts. This castle is a very "private" world that, architectonically, presents a hierarchy of storeys in which each "higher" storey includes all the "lower" storeys. Experientially it marks the interplay

<sup>79</sup> Literally rendered the Tibetan phrase *la zla-ba* means "to cross a high mountain pass," but what is intended by this phrase is the feeling of an utter certainty. Maybe only a person who has experienced the crossing of a high mountain pass and the taking in of the unbounded panorama before his eyes can understand and appreciate the very meaning of this phrase.

<sup>80</sup> *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 334b:

*ming ma-thogs-kyi sngon-rol-na*  
*cang-med tha-snyad gang-gis kyang*  
*ma-gos-pa-yi brda' gcig yod.*

<sup>81</sup> Note the *brda' gcig yod* in the last line of the quotation given in the preceding note.

<sup>82</sup> *Science, Meaning, and Evolution*, p. 18.

between stability, flexibility, and their “intertwining” in what is called the completion phase. Stability is tantamount to rigidity that, on the spiritual plane, is a state of “con-centration” (*bsam-gtan*)<sup>83</sup> within the parameters of representational (and, therefore, not strictly spiritual) thinking. Flexibility expresses itself, on the physical and social levels, in ritual acts, in which the so-called transformative phase (*bskyed-rim*) provides the syntax (specific arrangements), and the so-called completion phase (*rdzogs-rim*) provides the semantics (context of meaning).<sup>84</sup> In the Western context, these ideas can be easily recognized in the aphoristic statement by the German poet Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg):<sup>85</sup>

Die Welt muss romantisiert werden. So findet man den ursprünglichen Sinn wieder. Das niedere Selbst wird mit einem bessern Selbst in dieser Operation identifiziert. So wie wir selbst eine solche qualitative Potenzreihe sind. Diese Operation ist noch ganz unbekannt. Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnisvolles Ansehn, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe, so romantisier ich es.—Umgekehrt ist die Operation für das Höhere, Unbekannte, Mystische, Unendliche—dies wird durch die Verknüpfung logarithmisirt—es bekommt einen geläufigen Ausdruck.

(The world must be romanticized. Thereby the original meaning is rediscovered. In this operation the base self is identified with a better self. [This operation proceeds] In the same manner as we ourselves are such a series of powers. This operation is still quite unknown. To the extent that I bestow a high meaning on the base, a mysterious appearance on the ordinary, the dignity of the unknown on the known, an infinite splendor on the finite, I romanticize it.—In the case of the higher, unknown, mystical, infinite, this operation goes the opposite way—it becomes intensified logarithmically by way of their connectedness—it turns into an ongoing expression).

To the extent that the castle is a model of the experiencer’s world-as-lived by him, carrying the imprint of his physical, social, and ego-logical/spiritual consciousness, its residents, the castle’s Lord and Lady, share the same complexity. There are, on the “social” level, the castle’s Lord (*bdag-po*) and Lady (*bdag-mo*) who, on the “social-physical” level, double as a father (*pha*) and a mother (*ma*)

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed analysis of what is meant by this term and its critique in indigenous Tibetan works see Herbert V. Guenther, *From Reductionism to Creativity*, pp. 70f.

<sup>84</sup> For details see Herbert Guenther, *The Creative Vision*.

<sup>85</sup> *Magische Fragmente*, 1788.

and, on the “imaginal-spiritual” level, double as archetypal Father (*yab*) and archetypal Mother (*yum*) who are self-imaginings of the (anthropic) whole’s spirituality (*thugs*). Far from being some solitary, self-subsisting, static entity, a one or even *The One*, as which representational thinking likes to conceive it, spirituality is a self-projective self-manifesting dynamism that in its very self-projection and self-manifestation displays the principle of complementarity, at first in the archetypal images of a Father *and* a Mother, and then in the concrete figures of an actual father *and* an actual mother. But, as we have seen, father and mother, whether actual or archetypal, need a third element to have any appreciable meaning of being a father *and* a mother. This third element is the father-mother couple’s child (*bu*) who, on the social-physical, level is their son and, on the imaginal-spiritual level, the Anthropos, the Little Man of Light (*khye’u-chung*). This intertwining complexity is expressed by Padmasambhava in the following terse stanza:<sup>86</sup>

In the castle “invariant concentration”<sup>87</sup> (on top of) the three levels of the transformative stage, the completion stage, and the completeness stage<sup>88</sup>

The Lord (*bdag-po*) and the Lady (*bdag-mo*) of this castle and its storeys,<sup>89</sup> (in their imaginal aspects of being)

<sup>86</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 251b–252a:

*bskyed rdzogs rnam-gsum mi-'gyur bsam-gtan mkhar*  
*mkhar-khang gnyis-kyi bdag-po bdag-mo-ba*  
*kun-bzang yab-yum pha-ma-la*  
*bu ni ngang-dangs rin-chen-'od*  
*bza'-mi gsum-gyi mkhar-khang yin*  
*de-ltar mkhar dang khang-pa brtsegs*  
*mkhar-khang bdog ste nor mi-bdog*

<sup>87</sup> *mi-'gyur bsam-gtan mkhar*. On the exact meaning of *mkhar* see p. 100 n. 68, and on the exact meaning of *bsam-gtan* see Herbert V. Guenther, *From Reductionism to Creativity*, pp. 70f. There are two terms denoting “invariance” in the Tibetan language. The one used here, *mi-'gyur-ba*, has a “functional” connotation; the other, *'gyur-med*, has an “ontological” connotation.

<sup>88</sup> This is the full rendering of the terse phrase *bskyed rdzogs rnam-gsum*, where *bskyed* (short for *bskyed-rim*) refers to the imaginative transformation of one’s self and environing world into a divine being in a divine realm, *rdzogs* (short for *rdzogs-rim*) to the completion of the antecedent transformation stage, and *rnam-gsum* to the holistic experience, variously termed *rdzogs-chen* “completeness/wholeness in an ultimate sense,” or *dbyer-med* “inseparability/indivisibility.”

<sup>89</sup> In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 251a, Padmasambhava defines the “lower storey” (*'og-khang*) as symbolizing the three Lower Tantras (taken up for the most part with ritual), the “intermediate storey” (*bar-khang*) as symbolizing the non-duality of the transformation and completion stages, and the “upper storey” (*steng-khang*) as symbolizing the completeness stage.

Archetypal Father (*yab*) *Kun-tu bzang-po* (He who is goodness *par excellence*) and Archetypal Mother (*yum*) *Kun-tu bzang-mo* (She who is goodness *par excellence*) (as “real”) father and mother (*pha-ma*)<sup>90</sup>

Had an (only) child (*bu*) whose disposition was to become alight and (whose name was) Precious Light.<sup>91</sup>

To these three persons the castle and its storeys belonged.

While thus a castle and its stories had been built (by and for themselves)

They owned the castle and its storeys, but they did not possess the [Wish-fulfilling] Jewel.<sup>92</sup>

Sensing that within this material world of theirs something is missing, the parents tell their son, who now is addressed as “Little Man of luminous disposition” (*khye'u-chung ngang-dangs*), to go to the bazaar and buy the missing jewel. Duly counselled, the son does so, and after an arduous journey that actually is more of an inward journey, he comes to a country described in the following words.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> The contrast between the archetypal images of a Father and a Mother (*yab-yum*) and the “concrete” images of a father and a mother (*pha-ma*) should be noted. The point is that the “spiritual” and the “physical” intertwine.

<sup>91</sup> The whole phrase *ngang-dangs rin-chen-'od* is an allusion to the archetypal Anthropos (*khye'u-chung*) who, in particular, is described as *ngang-dangs*. The juxtaposition of this phrase with the term *bu*, meaning a “child,” a “boy” and/or a “son,” intimates the intertwining of the physical-(social) level with the imaginal-(social) level, the *khye'u-chung*.

<sup>92</sup> The theme of the Jewel (*nor-bu*) is similar to the theme in the *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*, where a prince is sent by his father to Egypt to recover a hidden treasure, the Pearl. This *Hymn* is said to have been sung by the apostle Judas Thomas to comfort his fellow prisoners when he himself was in prison in India. See Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 29. Concerning the open question whether the motifs in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles show “gnostic” or “encratite” influences, see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 197 n. 28. In any case, the theme of the *Hymn of the Pearl* seems to have been familiar to the followers of the rDzogs-chen teaching. See also Herbert V. Guenther, *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained*, p. 126 n. 63. Padmasambhava, however, has changed the retrieval of the Jewel into a business transaction.

<sup>93</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 251b:

*yul mun-snang gnyis-kyi so-mtshams-na*  
*ci btab skye-ba'i lung-pa-na*  
*rin-chen rang-'bar ngang-dangs zhugs*

Inasmuch as the text from which this quotation has been taken is badly preserved, I have emended this passage on the basis of an almost identical version in the same text on fol. 249b, which reads as follows:

*mun-snang gnyis-kyi so-mtshams-na*  
*ci btab skye-ba'i lung-pa yod*  
*de-na thams-cad yid-'ong me-tog rgyas*  
*'bras-bu rang-'bar ngang-dangs rin-po-che*

In the no man's land (*so-mtshams*) between darkness and brightness,  
 In a (hidden) valley where whatever has been seeded grows,  
 There lies a precious, thoroughly luminous gem, ablaze all by itself.

This precious gem, unrecognized and lying concealed "out there" in a hidden valley is the most precious asset an individual has; "in here" (in him) it is thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*) the properties of which, if we may say so, are outlined by Padmasambhava in the lines that follow the above quotation:<sup>94</sup>

With this precious (*rin-chen*), thoroughly luminous gem, thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*),  
 There are (found) sun and moon dispelling darkness, and  
 A sword cutting through [and thereby putting an end to one's] going astray, and [all this]  
 Is there [as] the precious Jewel (*nor-bu*) that sustains the life of all that comes about.<sup>95</sup>  
 Get possession of this inexhaustible treasure.

Still, getting possession of this Jewel is not a simple affair. After all, this treasure is not some ordinary merchandise, and so Padma-

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*de-la kun kyang 'dod-pa skyes*

In the no man's land between darkness and brightness  
 There exists a (hidden) valley where there grows whatever has been seeded.  
 There, a flower that is pleasing to each and every one, has opened up.  
 Its fruit is a precious gem, thoroughly luminous in a blaze all by itself.  
 It (grants the fulfilment of) whatever desires one may harbor.

The emendation consists in replacing the *ldum-ra* "vegetable garden" in line two by *lung-pa* and the *rang-sangs* "dissipating by itself" in line four by *rang-'bar* of the text on fol. 251b. See also Padmasambhava's *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 348b.

It is of utmost importance to pay attention to the contrasting usage of *rin-chen* (as a noun meaning a "gem" and as an adjective meaning "precious") and *nor-bu* ("jewel") in this allegorical story. Both *rin-chen* and *nor-bu* denote something precious and extremely valuable. The difference between the two is that, in terms of life's value, *rin-chen* is this value, though recognized, but as yet unrealized, while *nor-bu* is this value realized.

<sup>94</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 251b:

*sems-nyid rin-chen ngang-dangs-la*  
*mun-pa sel-ba'i nyi-zla yod*  
*'khrul-pa gcod-pa'i spu-gri yod*  
*kun-'byung 'tsho-ba'i nor-bu rin-chen yod*  
*zad-med gter-chen de-na bdog*

<sup>95</sup> *kun-'byung*. This technical term refers to one's ingrained tendencies in their latent and manifest states that re-inforce each other. Since a human being is this Jewel, he or she is an active element in a dynamic world; in the words of Erich Jantsch, *Design for Evolution*, p. 106, he or she is the "cybernetic actor."

sambhava lets the boy's parents tell him more about this mysterious jewel:<sup>96</sup>

Once, you Little Man of luminous disposition and radiant spirituality  
 have arrived there,  
 (You will find that) one side (of the country) lies in brightness  
 (While) the other side lies in darkness.  
 In the no man's land between darkness and brightness (there lies)  
 Not found by anyone, invisible,  
 Not recognized by anyone, concealed,  
 Not understood by anyone, invariant,<sup>97</sup>  
 Not obtained by anyone, ineffable,  
 This precious Jewel (*nor-bu rin-chen*) that, invariant, is  
 The enormous and inexhaustible treasure of all that comes about:  
 Thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*), a superb and priceless Jewel (*nor-bu  
 rin-thang che*).  
 Little Man of luminous disposition, buy this Radiant-Light Jewel ('*od-  
 gsal nor*).<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, fols. 251b–252a:

*ngang-dangs rig-gsal khye'u-chung der phyin-nas  
 phyogs-gcig snang-bar gda' 'o skad  
 phyogs-gcig mun-par gda' 'o [252a] skad  
 mun-snang gnyis-kyi so-mthshams-su  
 sus kyang ma-rnyed ma-mthong-ba  
 sus kyang ma-she's ma-mngon-pa  
 sus kyang ma-rtogs mi-'gyur-ba  
 sus kyang ma-thob brjod-med-pa  
 mi-'gyur nor-bu rin-chen de  
 kun-'byung mi-zad gter-mdzod che  
 sems-nyid nor-bu rin-thang che  
 ngang-dangs khye'u-chung 'od-gsal nor de nyo*

<sup>97</sup> *mi-'gyur-ba*. On this term having a “functional” connotation, see above n. 87.

<sup>98</sup> '*od-gsal nor*. The implication and meaning of this compound is that the “radiant light” ('*od-gsal*) is the [wish-fulfilling] jewel (*nor-bu*), in the same way as this jewel is the radiant light by virtue of which we are luminous beings in the sense that we bring this light with us and are in duty bound to let this (invisible) light shine forth. In an essay entitled “Aletheia” in his *Early Greek Thinking*, Martin Heidegger has dealt with this problem of our being as “not only illuminated in the lighting, but [...] also enlightened from it and toward it” (p. 120). A phenomenological-hermeneutical explication of Heidegger's tortuous passage has been attempted by David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, pp. 448ff. None of these authors refers to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's dictum:

Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast,  
 Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen  
 (What from your ancestors you have inherited  
 Acquire it in order to possess it).  
*Faust* Part I, “Night” vs. 712–713.

Padmasambhava seems to have anticipated Goethe's insight.

The scene for the business transaction has now been set and, in a highly dramatic and stylistically impressive presentation, Padma-sambhava elaborates on this transaction in its life-like character as follows:<sup>99</sup>

Buy it from the Lady (*bdag-mo*), a blind old woman.<sup>100</sup>  
 Send the three discriminative-appreciative awareness modes<sup>101</sup> as  
 mediators and  
 Conclude the transaction with [the help of] precepts and learning.<sup>102</sup>  
 Pay for it with your intellectually-conceptually restricted vision,  
 Pay for it with your ego-centric contemplation,  
 Pay for it with your self-serving conduct,  
 Pay for it with your ego-centrally preconceived goal,  
 Pay for it with your insatiable desires,  
 Pay for it with your stock of subjectivity,

<sup>99</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbuor*, 2: 252a:

*bdag-mo rgan-mo long-ma gcig-las nyo*  
*bar-mir shes-rab rnam-gsum btang*  
*lung-rigs gnyis-kyi tshong-zhig byas*  
*blos brtags lta-ba rin-du 'jal*  
*yid-bzung bsgom-pa rin-du 'jal*  
*ched-byas spyod-pa rin-du 'jal*  
*yid-smon 'bras-bu rin-du 'jal*  
*'dod-pa ngoms-med rin-du 'jal*  
*'dzin-pa'i phung-po rin-du 'jal*  
*zhen-pa'i mtsho-mo rin-du 'jal*  
*mun-pa'i 'khor-sgo rin-du 'jal*  
*rin bryad bcal-nas nor-zhig thob*  
*nor ni kun-'byung rin-po-che*  
*gnyis-med chen-por tshong-zhig zin*  
*'khor-'das gnyis-med tshong-zhig zin*  
*sangs-rgyas sems-can gnyis-med tshong-zhig zin*  
*ma-rig ye-shes gnyis-med tshong-zhig zin*

<sup>100</sup> The association of the “Lady” who is none other than the Lady of the Universe of which we are a part by being Her child(ren), with a lone old woman who is blind, may seem strange. We in the West with few exceptions tend to conceive of women, old age, and loneliness as evil, as well documented by Nel Noddings in her engaging study *Women and Evil*. We also tend to speak of love and passion as being “blind,” lacking in foresight and hindsight. But there is a different way of looking at old age and blindness. The “Lady” as a symbol of the generative force of wholeness is so old as to have been there before time, and she is blind (by ordinary human standards) because she “sees” ek-statically, that is, in and from an original outside-itself, which is to say that she sees from outside the ego-logically constituted mind.

<sup>101</sup> They are the individual’s heightened psychic capacities (*shes-rab*) of understanding what is meant by ultimate reality, of understanding what is meant by commonly accepted reality, and of being involved with what furthers the living beings in their spiritual concerns

<sup>102</sup> *lung-rigs*. Here *lung* refers to the precepts, admonitions and related topics as laid down in books and *rigs* to the study of them and to what one learns from them.

Pay for it with your ocean of yearnings,  
 Pay for it with your readiness to enter darkness.  
 Once you have paid these eight prices<sup>103</sup> you will get the unique Jewel.  
 With (the purchase of) this Jewel, the precious awareness of what has  
 led to your enworldedness,<sup>104</sup>  
 You have bought the ultimate in non-duality (which means that)  
 You have bought the non-duality of samsara and nirvana,  
 You have bought the non-duality of spiritual wakefulness and unre-  
 generated opinionatedness,  
 You have bought the non-duality of (an ordinary person's) un-know-  
 ing and (a seer's) ordinary awareness modes.<sup>105</sup>

With the purchase of the Jewel, which means the realization of one's Self that as an ongoing process of an unfolding does not only not admit of any duality and rejects any reduction to any one position, but also does not turn non-duality into another logical construct, the time has come to "return home." Padmasambhava concludes this beautiful allegorical tale of the "upward unfolding" (*yar rgyas*) with these words:<sup>106</sup>

Once you have completed the business transaction there, come back home.

Inside your home that is the dimensionality of the giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid dbyings*),

<sup>103</sup> The eight prices divide evenly into the "rational" and "emotional" aspects of an individual, all of which are ego-logical in nature.

<sup>104</sup> *kun-'byung*, short for *kun-'byung shes-pa* because of metrical requirements.

<sup>105</sup> These last three lines detail the "ultimate in non-duality." There is, first, the locale or the experiencer's interpreted world, split up into the opposites of samsara (*'khor*) and nirvana (*'das*), then, secondly, there is the experiencer himself, either a spiritually awake person (*sangs-rgyas*, popularly called a or the Buddha) or a person under the dominance of his opinions (*sems-can*, usually rendered as a sentient being), and, lastly, there is the functioning that makes either interpretation possible by way of the intensity involved in this complexity, be this an ordinary person's "un-excited" state (*ma-rig-pa*) or a spiritually "excited" (*rig-pa*) person's ordinary awareness modes (*ye-shes*).

<sup>106</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 252a:

*de-ru tshong-zin khyim-du phyin*  
*chos-nyid dbyings-kyi khyim-nang-du*  
*gdams-ngag zab-mo'i byang-chang 'thungs*  
*ting-'dzin bdud-rtsi chen-po zos*  
*bde-ba chen-po'i gos-shig gon*  
*'gyur-ba med-pa'i gdan-zhig bting*  
*chos-nyid 'gyur-med sbas-shig bcug*  
*bde-chen klong-du khyur-gyis nyal*  
*mi-bya rtsol-ba'i las ma-bya*  
*bya-ba thams-cad btang-la tha-mal rang-lugs bzhugs*  
*chos-nyid dbyings-su mnal-log-go*

Drink the welcoming drink of profound spiritual advice,  
 Eat the tasty nectar of the in-depth appraisal (of your wholeness),  
 Don the robe of bliss supreme,  
 Make ready the couch of invariance,<sup>107</sup>  
 Huddle up in the hidden nook of this invariance, the giving birth to  
 thoughts/meanings, and  
 Soundly fall asleep in the vortex of bliss supreme.  
 Do not engage in an ordinary person's activities that look for things to  
 be done (purposively).  
 While renouncing all (worldly) duties and concerns, stay with your  
 natural beingness.  
 This (is what is meant by) going to sleep in the dimensionality of the  
 giving birth to thoughts/meanings.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> On 'gyur-ba med-pa, 'gyur-med in its short form, with its "ontological" connotation, see above n. 87. In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 244b, Padmasambhava lets the Teacher "goodness *par excellence*" answer the question about the aspects of invariance by the disciple rDo-rje-sems-dpa' as follows:

*'pho-'gyur med-pas chos-nyid 'gyur-ba-med*  
*skye-'chi med-pas chos-nyid 'gyur-ba-med*  
*skye-'gag med-pas chos-nyid 'gyur-ba-med*  
*bsam-las-'das-pas chos-nyid 'gyur-ba-med*  
*dmigs-las-'das-pas chos-nyid 'gyur-ba-med*  
*blo-las-'das-pas chos-nyid 'gyur-ba-med*

The invariance of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings is such that there is no stepping out of itself into something other ("transmigration") and no transformation of some thing into some other thing;  
 That there is neither birth nor death;  
 That there is no coming-into-existence and no cessation-of-existing;  
 That it transcends (the ego-logical premises of) rational thinking;  
 That it transcends (the ego-logical concern with) objectifiability; and  
 That it transcends (the ego-logical narrowness of the) intellect.

As will have been noted, in this passage "invariance" is an aspect of the giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*), not an aspect of thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*), as in the passage quoted above. There is no contradiction involved: giving birth to thoughts/meanings and thinking's thinking are more like the two sides of the same coin, none can be reduced to the other.

<sup>108</sup> Padmasambhava concludes this allegory by the cryptic and seemingly undecipherable statement:

*brda'-yi man-ngag don-gyi gnad*  
*rdo-rje-sems-dpa'i thugs-la chongs*  
*dga'-rab-rdo-rjes nyams-su longs*

The quintessence of what is meant by this revelatory event presented in symbolic language  
 Was kept in the "mind" (*thugs*) of rDo-rje-sems-dpa' and  
 Was made a "heart"-felt experience (*nyams*) by dGa'-rab-rdo-rje.

There is, first, the contrast between *thugs*—its translation by "mind" is quite inadequate because what the Tibetan term intends is what we would call (a person's) *Geistigkeit* or spirituality in the sense that this spirituality *is* the person—and *nyams* which I have

This beautiful allegorical account of a young person being sent to find his existential value and, after having found it, of returning to his spiritual home, reminiscent of the gnostic *Hymn of the Pearl*, uniquely blends the “worldly” with the “spiritual.” The worldly character is evident from the use of such terms as a “castle” with its “storeys,” and a “bazaar.” The spiritual character is emphasized by the “Jewel,” invisible to ordinary eyes and ineffable by ordinary language, and by the feeling of bliss supreme that as the experienter’s peace of mind lets him sleep (and dream) happily. Written in verse form, this allegory of being sent out to find one’s existential value, has in Padmasambhava’s capable hands become a mystical-spiritual poem, *because* it is so very worldly and not some shallow escapism.

### C. The Experiencing

The question of how did it all begin and how will it all end (if there is an end and if it is not as elusive as the beginning that may never have been) will have to be asked some time or other. So far this question has been dealt with “descriptively.” There is another way of dealing with it. It starts from the immediacy of experience as it presents itself through the whole’s symbolic mode that was already at work “before there was any naming.”<sup>109</sup>

This initial situation is our pre-conceptual and pre-ontological *Befindlichkeit* in the field of Being that in its intimately felt presence is termed a “temple” (*lha-khang*). Through this *Befindlichkeit* in Being as a whole we are not only attuned to it, but also experience it in degrees of intensity. These degrees are presented in the form of

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paraphrased by “heart’-felt experience.” Second, there is the contrast between rDo-rje-sems-dpa’ (a “spiritual” personage) and dGa’-rab-rdo-rje (a “human” personage). Both of them stand in relation to the dynamic uni-trinity of (1) the Primordial “Buddha” (*ye-thog-ma’i sangs-rgyas*) whose inspiring and vivifying presence (*byin-rlabs*) is (2) the Real and First “Buddha” in what has become our world system (*dam-pa dang-po’i sangs-rgyas kun-gyi spyi-phud*) and who then as the strength of (the whole’s) originary awareness modes (*ye-shes-mthu*) is (3) *Kun-tu bzang-po* in what has now constituted itself as our own most unique beingness (*rang-bzhin kun-tu bzang-po*). His “follower” (*rjes-’jug*), in the sense that it is our mind that emulates *Kun-tu bzang-po*, is rDo-rje-sems-dpa’. Third, there is the “lineage” of this spiritual dimension in the human sphere (*gdung-tshab*) beginning with dGa’-rab-rdo-rje, a native of Orgyan—the same country from which Padmasambhava hails. For a detailed account of the above sketch see the *Ri-bo brtsegs-pa’i rgyud*, 3: 2ab, probably a work by Padmasambhava himself.

<sup>109</sup> See above p. 102.

literary vignettes that paint and speak the truths of experience. Padmasambhava's words about the initial situation are as follows:<sup>110</sup>

In a temple that was an utter nothingness-radiance (*stong-gsal*)  
 An insane<sup>111</sup> demiurgic person<sup>112</sup> looked around (and since)  
 There was no-thing (whatsoever) in it, he did not see any-thing.  
 Then and there his thinking capacity (*bsam-pa*) was sadly incapacitated.<sup>113</sup>  
 His memory (*dran-pa*) was wiped out, his reasoning (*blo*) was driven off, and  
 His intelligence (*rig-pa*) did not know how to make any observation and how to utter any meaningful word.  
 This is, in symbolic language, the situation before there was any naming.

<sup>110</sup> *sNyung-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 339b:

*stong-gsal phyang-chad-kyi lha-khang-na*  
*rlung-smyo kun-byed-kyi mis bltas-pas*  
*ci-yang mi-'dug gang ma-mthong*  
*der kho'i bsam-pa sdug*  
*dran-pa brlags blo stor-ro*  
*rig-pas mtha' gang-du-yang mtshon-brjed-kyi tshig ci-yang smra mi-shes-so.*  
*sngon-rol ming ma-thogs-kyi brda' 'o.*

<sup>111</sup> Literally the Tibetan term *rlung-smyo* means "insane by virtue of the wind," the "wind" being one of the three "defects" (*skyon*) in Indian and Tibetan medicine causing mental diseases. Apart from this narrow application of the term *rlung* there is an ontological dimension to it, which makes it a term for the inner dynamics of any system (be this a human person, the universe, or, in philosophical language Being-as-such), a kind of "turbulence" that does not allow the system to stagnate and that links it to such other technical terms as *rtsal*, (Being's, the whole's) "functionality," and *rig-pa*, the "(the whole's) excitability." Experienced as "ecstatic intensity" it is an integral aspect of the primordial Being (*dang-po gzhi*) as which Being-as-such (*gzhi-nyid*) has constituted itself and provides the "origin" of our *Befindlichkeit* that makes it possible for us to find our bearings and move about in our world. In the words of Padmasambhava, *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 8b:

*rig-pa rlung-bzhin 'gyu-zhing spyod-par nus*

(By virtue of this) *rig-pa*, moving like the wind, (we are) able to move about.

<sup>112</sup> The Tibetan term *kun-byed-kyi mi*, here rendered as "a demiurgic person," is made up of two elements: the noun *mi* "man" and the noun *kun-byed* "all-doer" that looks deceptively like a "verb + its object" construction in the Western pattern. In the Tibetan language, modelled after the Sanskrit grammatical pattern, the object stands before the verb to which it belongs. However, *kun-byed* is a term in which *kun* emphasizes the *byed* to the effect that there is "nothing but" (this) doing.

<sup>113</sup> There are two different readings: the sDe-dge edition reads *sdug* "downcast," "depressed," "sad," the Thimpu edition (vol. 6, p. 295) reads *rdugs* "devastated," "wrecked." I have tried to combine both meanings. The term "thinking capacity" (*bsam-pa*) refers to that and any other person's representational mode of thinking.

The very first line in this deceptively simple statement is already a “loaded” proposition, the rich meaning of which our ordinary language is quite unable to convey. The best we can do is to paraphrase the “literal” (that is, mechanical, switching-of-words) translation by saying:

In the experience (*Erlebnis*) of oneself as an intensity (*lha*, a “god”) setting up and occupying its own spatiality (*khang*, a “house”) that in its openness/nothingness (*stong*, the “zero-point energy of the whole”) is absolutely commensurate with its radiance (*gsal*, a “brilliant light”) ...

In this anthropocosmic experience as the initial situation of the evolving process of becoming Man/human (*Menschwerdung*), even the cosmic level is already depicted in humanly evocative terms: the sheer intensity of the experience that in all its openness/nothingness and radiance is already disturbed by a turbulence assuming anthropic features in the image of a demiurgic person.

The idea of a demiurge was first propounded by Plato (428/7–348/7 B.C.E.) for whom the universe was the living manifestation of the work of a primordial artist and craftsman (Demiurge).<sup>114</sup> Plotinus (205–270) for whom all reality consists of a series of emanations, equated him with the first necessary emanation of the One, the *nous* (reason, intellect). Certain Gnostics, in particular the Sethians, demoted the demiurge to a second, rather disreputable, God.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>114</sup> The relevant passage is found in *Timaeus* 28 B. This work is named after the Pythagorean astronomer Timaeus who occupies the place of Socrates in Plato’s earlier dialogues. However, it is worth noting that Plato’s God, unlike the Jewish and Christian God, did not create the world out of nothing—a thesis proposed by Irenaeus (b. ca. 130 C.E.) and refined by Tertullian (b. ca. 160 C.E.)—but merely rearranged already pre-existent material. Padmasambhava, on the one hand, speaks of the dynamics of the whole’s self-manifestation as *kun-byed* (see his *sPros-bral dom-gsal*, 1: 7a), and, on the other hand, explicitly states that the whole’s energy (*snying-po*) has nothing to do with a creator (*byed-pa-po med-pa*). See his *sPyi-gnad skyon-sel*, 2: 315a. In his *Nyizla’i snying-po*, 3: 30a, he uses the phrase *byed-pa-pos ma-byas-pa* “not made by an artificer.”

<sup>115</sup> As reported by Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 81, according to the *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II.1.10.20ff.), Ialdabaoth “unites with his companion, Aponoia (lack of sense), the negative counterpart of the archetypal Ennoia and symbol of the Demiurge’s intellectual blindness.” The cosmos that he and his Archons together with his and their consorts create is a deformed copy of the pleromatic world. The interesting point to note is that the creation of the world is the joint effort of the male and female partners, as is the creation of the tripartite cosmos by the myriarchs (*khri-rje*) and their consorts, which suggests that the (Buddhist) myriarch is the counterpart of the (Gnostic) demiurge. There is, however, a tremendous difference between the two accounts. While in the Gnostic version the female element is denigrated at the expense

Their assessment of him may have influenced Padmasambhava to speak of the demiurge as an “insane” person.

Turning to the individually experienced level of the primal situation, we noticed that it focuses on the psychological implications and circumscribes a person’s ordinary representational mode of thinking that is pre-eminently objectifying thinking (*bsam-pa*). It is from *its* perspective that the experiencer in the whole’s pre-articulated dimension feels himself so utterly incapacitated. As such, a person’s representational mode of thinking is the coordinated outcome of three mentation levels: (1) memory (*dran-pa*) in the sense of the organism’s memory of its ontological self and its identity with itself, (2) the capacity of reasoning (*blo*) involving a sense of self as contrasted with an other, and (3) the capacity to recognize, discriminate, and verbalize (*rig-pa*). Again, it is from a person’s ego-logical perspective, unable to understand any pre-personal or primordial thinking, that all the three levels that go into its very making, seem to have been undone. Certainly, confronted with the whole’s intensity and radiance, the “ego-personality” cannot but go crazy. Still, there is much more to Padmasambhava’s laconic utterance. If it were not for the sheer intensity (the nothingness of the whole’s zero-point energy) and its radiance (the extensity of a *pre-spatium*) rooted, as it were, in a temple (the experiencer’s value-awareness of his *Befindlichkeit*), the whole ensuing process of becoming Man/human might just have been

... a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.<sup>116</sup>

Where does this “insanity” come from? Padmasambhava’s answer could not be more radical. “Insanity” is already present in the “temple,” the divine (*lha*) “closure” (*khang*) that we are as the anthropic universe’s experiencers. Padmasambhava’s insight is in line with the most daring Gnostic thinkers for whom evil “originates in the very bosom of the divinity, in the universe, in the Pleroma, the world of plenitude and perfection,”<sup>117</sup> and with the God-image of the mystic Jakob Boehme, expressed in a mandala with the two halves

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of the male element, in the Buddhist version it is She who is intelligence, appreciation, insight (*shes-rab*), and the male element is operance (*thabs*), the two forming a necessary and indivisible connectedness.

<sup>116</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, v. 16.

<sup>117</sup> Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 56.

halves of the circle standing “back to back,” illustrating an immanent tension within the God-image itself.<sup>118</sup>

Although for reasons of clarity we have spoken of two levels in the whole’s pre-articulated dimension, we must be careful not to conceive of them as existing in separation. But, then, to speak of them as a duality-without-separation is no less than another instance of our being caught in the self-defeating attempt to verbalize and implicitly falsify what was operative “long before we were able to verbalize.” Thus, bearing in mind that thought struggles incessantly against the treachery of language and that what we observe and describe is the observer himself, we may nonetheless proceed to investigate the successive phases in our becoming human beings. Throughout these phases, the experience (*das Erleben*) of ourselves as an intensity (imaged and felt as a “god,” *lha*) setting up its own spatiality (imaged and felt as a “house,” *khang*) is present in various intensities of illumination that occur within ourselves as a “temple.” A corollary of this *Erleben* is its light character manifesting itself in various “frequencies” or colors. This is to say, since we are beings of light we display this light in a multiplicity of nuances. Thus Padmasambhava continues:<sup>119</sup>

In a temple (with) precious (walls) radiating in five colors,  
 A “rainbow”-person, riding on a “mirage”-horse, looked around and  
 saw  
 In this temple (another) temple (made) of light that was (both) radiat-  
 ing (and) symbolically pregnant. (In it)  
 There were (two) divine figures (*lha*); (the one) slightly stirring, (the  
 other) not stirring at all.  
 This is, in symbolic language, a presentation of the (common) ground  
 (*gzhi*) for (one’s) becoming spiritually awake (*sangs-rgyas*) and  
 (one’s) getting caught up in opinions (*sems-can*).

In relation to the primal situation, the “temple that was an utter nothingness-radiance,” a marked “closure” has occurred. This temple, which the experiencer-turned-beholder experiences, consists of

<sup>118</sup> Erich Jantsch, *The Self-organizing Universe*, p. 308. For further details see also Basarab Nicolescu, *Science, Meaning, and Evolution*, pp. 83f.

<sup>119</sup> *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 339b:

*kha-dog lnga gsal rin-po-che'i lha-khang-na*  
*smig-rgyu'i rta-la 'ja'-tshon-gyi mis zhon-nas bltas-pas*  
*lha-khang de-na gsal-dag 'od-kyi lha-khang*  
*g.yo-tsam mi-g.yo-tsam-gyi lha 'dug-go*  
*sems-can sangs-rgyas-kyi gzhi mtshon-gyi brda' 'o*

“precious” (*rin-po-che*) and, implicitly, immaterial walls, shining in five colors that, on the one hand, prefigure the formation of an essentially immaterial rainbow and, on the other hand, are related to the precious materials forming the walls—gold, silver, turquoise, coral, and pearl.<sup>120</sup> Simultaneously the five colors constitute themselves as the five originary awareness modes (*ye-shes*) that in their coordination are envisioned as a “rainbow”-person who is aware of himself and his environing world in an “originary” (*ursprünglich*) manner.<sup>121</sup> The dynamics of this primarily visual awareness is intimated by the “mirage”-horse on which a “rainbow”-person rides. Both the horse and the rider are immaterial in the sense that they are felt images in a world that is quite “real,” though not in the physical-material sense. It is tempting to see in the “horse” a person’s instinctual nature (whatever this may mean) and in the “rider” a person’s spiritual nature (whatever this may mean) that is supposed to control and dominate the base instinctual nature. These are dualistic notions. But the Self (for want of a better term) with which the whole evolutionary process is concerned, is a non-dualistic notion; it is inseparable from the dynamics through which it expresses itself. In this imaginal world the rider comes to another “temple” that also is made of an intense light (*'od*), but this light is more of the nature of a proto-light that is becoming a radiating (*gsal*) light and, in contrast with the “nothingness” of the primal “temple,” is the light’s (and, by implication, the temple’s) symbolic pregnancy (*dag*). We might say that this other “temple” shining in a proto-light, points to a phase that as pure potential is about to become a probability and possibility. The ensuing probability and possibility is vouchsafed by the co-presence of a subtle movement and an equally subtle “motionless” movement, felt and imaged as divine figures.

Probability turning into a distinct possibility is the next phase in this process of moving from the “infinite” of wholeness into the

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<sup>120</sup> Two contrasting ideas are combined in a single presentation. We cannot think of a mansion without walls that here are implied to be made of precious materials. Wholeness, even if imaged as a mansion, is not a mansion in the ordinary sense. In its dynamics it may be said to wrap itself around itself and turning itself, doughnut-like, into an “empty” mansion that, paradoxically, preserves the whole’s “precious” character. As the whole’s first “closure” this closure is termed *rin-chen* (short for *rin-po-che'i*) *sbubs* “a precious sheath.” See Padmasambhava’s *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 71b.

<sup>121</sup> It is for this *Ursprünglichkeit* so well expressed by the *ye* (“a time before time”) in the term *ye-shes* that I render this technical term by “originary awareness” and, since in most cases where this term is used, a fivefold is implied and intended, by “originary awareness modes.”

finite infinitude of being a human being, “finite” in being one who gets caught up in his opinions, and “infinite” in being one who becomes spiritually awake. Padmasambhava says of this phase:<sup>122</sup>

On a swiftly moving (*'gyu-ba*) stallion (that is the evolving anthropo-cosmic system's) “turbulence”-motility (*rlung*), there was riding  
A human (who was) both the (whole system's) intensification of its cognitive capacity (*shes-rig*) and (its) ego-logical self and overall psychic disposition to ego-centricity (*yid-sems*).<sup>123</sup>

Having arrived at a temple that had originated from (the whole system's) functionality (*rtsal*), the effulgence of (the whole's) luminosity (*'od-gsal*),<sup>124</sup> and, looking around, he saw

A certain divine figure sitting stock-still and immobile, and

Another divine figure being restless and agitable.

This is, in symbolic language, the presentation of the (mysterious) no man's land (dividing the common ground into) specific territories.

Still, the “materialization” process—if this is an appropriate expression since in Padmasambhava's dynamic thinking our static dualism (body-mind, matter-energy/spirit) has no place—has not yet run its course, but it approaches its terminus, the living experienter. Thus Padmasambhava continues:<sup>125</sup>

<sup>122</sup> *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 339b:

*'gyu-ba rlung-gi rta-pho-la*  
*shes-rig yid-sems-kyi mis zhon-nas*  
*'od-gsal rtсал-byung-gi lha-khang-du phyin-nas bltas-pas*  
*lha 'ga'-zhig g.yo-'gul-med-par bzhugs*  
*lha 'ga'-zhig 'gul-bskyod dang bcas-nas 'dug-go*  
*spyi-sa'i so-mtshams mtshon-pa'i brda' 'o*

<sup>123</sup> These two lines of the original Tibetan version (see the preceding note) defy any attempt at a “literal” translation. The two levels, the cosmic and the anthropic, are inextricably intertwined. While *'gyu-ba* points to a “stirring” in the whole and *rlung* “wind/turbulence/motility” describes its manifestation, in their becoming more “tangible,” if we may say so, they are felt as our own dynamics. Similarly, the whole is (pervasively) cognitive (*shes*) and one of its features is its excitability (*rig*). This means that we as cognitive beings are disposed to becoming (spiritually) excited, even if, for the sake of a comfortable conformity, we prefer to remain within the confines of our ego-logical self (*yid*) that is the “manifestation” of an overall psychic disposition to ego-centricity (*sems*). Here again we can easily recognize the principle of complementarity that pervades Padmasambhava's thinking: there is the excitability and/or supra-conscious ecstatic intensity (*rig*) of the whole and the overall psychic disposition to ego-centricity (*sems*), itself a low-intensity cognition (*ma-rig-pa*). In the line of thought that goes back to Padmasambhava *sems* and *ma-rig-pa* are synonymous.

<sup>124</sup> The contrast between *'od*, a kind of proto-light, spoken of in the preceding stanza, and *'od-gsal*, the proto-light (*'od*) having become a brilliance (*gsal*), is to be noted. Implied is a progressive “materialization” of the whole's sheer energy.

<sup>125</sup> *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 339b:

Riding on a stallion that is (the evolving human's) breath and (the cosmic level's) fog,

A "monkey"-person, (the whole's) ever-changingness,<sup>126</sup> arrived at  
The mysterious no man's land from where one path led upward and  
another one led downward. There were two temples and  
When, after having opened their doors, he looked at what was in  
(these temples),

(From the one temple) a brilliant light (that was his own) disposition  
and dimensionality of luminescence burst forth (which meant) that  
the door of a temple, precious, brilliant and symbolically pregnant,  
and pure in its presencing,<sup>127</sup> had been thrown wide open;

(From the other temple there) emerged a person who, clinging to his  
belief in an ego, was racing in pitch-black darkness from one vil-  
lage to another (which meant) that the door of a temple, darkness  
(itself), had been thrown wide open.

This is, in symbolic language, the presentation of the gates through  
which the originary awareness modes may dawn (upon the experi-  
encer) or through which he may go astray into the realm of errancy.

With this visionary experience a crucial situation has been reached.  
The experiencer may enter the gate of light and, as it were, return to  
the "temple/palatial mansion/citadel" that is his legitimate dwelling,  
or he may enter the gate of darkness and become involved in mis-  
taken identifications from which it becomes extremely difficult to  
extricate himself. But "rising" and "falling" are merely aspects of  
one and the same reality, the lived-in temple of one's humanity. For  
the time being, however, carried away by the momentum in this de-

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*na-bun kha-rlangs-kyi rta-pho-la*  
'gyur-ba spre'u'i mis zhon-nas  
yar-'gro mar-'gro'i so-mtshams-na lha-khang gnyis yod-pa-la  
sgo gang phye-nas 'dug-pa bltas-pas  
'od-gsal ngang-dangs byung-nas rin-po-che gsal-dag rnam-dag lha-khang-gi sgo  
phye  
ngar-'dzin mun-nag grong-rgyugs-mkhan byung-nas mun-pa lha-khang-gi sgo  
phye'o  
zhes gsungs-so  
'char-sgo dang 'khrul-sgo'i brda' 'o

<sup>126</sup> Here again the two levels are combined into a single notion: the "fog" (*na-bun*) and the "breath" (*kha-rlangs*), transforming themselves, as it were, into (the enviroing world's) ever-changingness (*'gyur-ba*) and a "monkey"-person (*spre'u'i mi*). The image of the monkey continues the notion of restlessness in the preceding stanza and aptly illustrates a person's more or less rapid breathing. The image of the ever-changingness of the world (that is as much "out there" as it is "in here") links up with the image of the fog that is about to blanket everything.

<sup>127</sup> For details about the two terms *gsal-dag* and *rnam-dag* see Introduction, p. 16 n. 40.

scent from lofty heights, the experiencer is more likely to move into the direction of darkness. And so Padmasambhava continues in a highly dramatic manner:<sup>128</sup>

Riding on a stallion (that is the experiencer's) ego-logical mind, a rapid movement,<sup>129</sup>

A human person (symbolizing the experiencer's) intellect (*blo*) (that results from the human system's) excitability (becoming its) disposition to ego-logical and ego-centric mentation (*rig-sems*) and (from the human system's) organismic mentation and conceptual fragmentation (*dran-rtog*),<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup> *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 339b-340a:

'gyu-ba yid-kyi rta-pho-la  
 rig-sems dran-rtog blo'i mis zhon-nas  
 'phrang-gsum sbubs-gsum-du phyin-nas  
 long-ma dug-sum-gyi 'khar-ba-can dang 'phrad-nas  
 khyod nga'i mun-pa'i g.yung-drung-la mi-blta-ba ci nyes  
 mun-pa'i lha-khang ltos-la  
 khyod [340a] med-pa-la yod-par zung-zhig  
 mi-bden-pa-la bden-par zung-zhig  
 mi-rtag-pa-la rtag-par zung-zhig  
 don-dam-la kun-rdzob-tu zung-zhig  
 ka-dag-la ma-dag-par zung-zhig  
 bde-ba-la sdug-bsngal-du zung-zhig  
 gnyis-med-la gnyis-su zung-zhig  
 dngos-med-la sna-tshogs-su zung-zhig  
 rtogs-pa-la ma-rtogs-par zung-zhig  
 ka-dag-la shrib-bcas-su zung-zhig  
 sangs-rgyas-la sems-can-du zung-zhig  
 mya-ngan-las-'das-pa-la 'khor-bar zung-zhig  
 sku-gsum-la dug-gsum-du zung-zhig  
 zhing-khams rnam-gsum-la dmyal-ba yi-dags ngan-song gsum-du zung-zhig  
 tho dang thag-pa dang smig-rgyu-la mi-sbrul-chu dang gsum-du zung-zhig  
 ces 'khrul-pa dang 'khrul-snang 'khor-ba brdas bstan-pa'o

<sup>129</sup> 'gyu-ba yid-kyi rta-pho-la. Note the difference in the "definition" of this rapid movement. In the stanza quoted in note 122, this rapid movement was said to be the human system's motility—"turbulence" (*rlung*), here it is the individual's ego-logical mind (*yid*). In other words, a further "closing-in onto itself" is involved.

<sup>130</sup> This is an extremely "packed" line. The equation of the intellect (*blo*) with a human person (*mi*) riding on a horse is easy to understand. There is, however, a contrast between the two first terms in the two compounds: *rig* is the system's excitability and, from the perspective of its intensity, the whole's supraconscious ecstatic intensity; *dran* is the system's organismic (metabolic) mentation and as "memory" instrumental in the individual's awareness of his personal identity. *sems* and *rtog* are related to each other in such a manner that *sems* refers to the overall ego-logical disposition and *rtog* to its conceptual operations with their assumption of a separation between observer (subject) and observed (object).

Arrived at three cul-de-sacs<sup>131</sup> and three culverts.<sup>132</sup>

There he met a blind woman holding a vessel containing the three poisons.<sup>133</sup> She said to him:

"What's wrong with you not looking at my emblematic world<sup>134</sup> of darkness?

Look around in this temple of darkness and

Take that which does not exist to be something existent,

Take that which is not true to be true,

Take that which is impermanent to be permanent,

Take that which is ultimately real to be only conventionally real,

Take that which is (the whole's) pure symbolic pregnancy to be (an)impure (banality),

Take bliss to be misery,

Take the non-dual to be dual,

Take the immaterial to be so many material things,

Take understanding to be non-understanding,

Take that which is (the whole's) pure symbolic pregnancy to be something shrouded/befogged,

Take a spiritually awake person to be a person caught in his opinions,

Take nirvana to be samsara,

Take the three patterns (that constitute your existentiality)<sup>135</sup> to be the three poisons,<sup>136</sup>

<sup>131</sup> *'phrang gsum*. On the meaning of *'phrang* see above p. 100 n. 67.

<sup>132</sup> *sbubs gsum*. In conformity with the "geography" of this landscape I have rendered *sbubs* by "culverts." Actually they are the infrastructure of the human system in its evolution. There is, first, the *rin-chen sbubs*, a "sheath of preciousness" that is, more commonly, referred to as *chos-sku* and, as it were, dating back to the hoary past when the process of becoming human began; then, secondly, there is the *'od-kyi sbubs*, a "sheath of light" that is associated with the *longs-sku*, intimating an individual's sociality and embeddedness in an as yet potential nexus that is a sort of "here and now" mood; and, thirdly, there is the *bag-chags sbubs*, a "sheath of sedimentations of experience" active in the shaping of the individual's future. While *'phrang* denotes an intellectual-spiritual impasse, *sbubs* denotes, from the perspective of the whole, the whole's closing-in on itself and forming a doughnut-like "sheath" and, from the perspective of the experiencer, an opening-up to the infrastructure's potential and possibilities. See also above p. 93 n. 49.

<sup>133</sup> The three poisons (*dug gsum*) are the traditional three emotions-pollutants: desire-attachment (*'dod-chags*), irritation-aversion (*zhe-sdang*), and dullness-insensitivity (*gti-mug*). The expression *'khar-ba-can*, here rendered as "with a vessel" might be more precisely understood as "being of the nature of a vessel." Freely rendered, while yet to the point, the phrase means "a blind woman who is like a vessel in which the three poisons are bottled up."

<sup>134</sup> *g.yung-drung*. Its representation is the swastika, a prehistoric symbol much used by the pre-Buddhist Bonpos to refer to their idea of Being as eternal being, which, as the Buddhists were quick to point out, is pure speculation.

<sup>135</sup> These are the three bodily felt patterns or schemata of experience (*sku*): *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku*.

<sup>136</sup> See above note 133.

Take the three spiritual realms<sup>137</sup> to be the three loathsome worlds of the denizens of hell, the spirits tormented by hunger and thirst, and animals, and

Take a cairn, a rope, and a mirage to be a human person, a snake, and water, respectively.”

This is a presentation of (a person's) going astray and (the whole's) lighting-up as (its) errancy mode by way of symbols.

Although a person may feel that his going astray is like a becoming ever more engulfed by and immersed in darkness, darkness itself is not without some intelligence and light. After all, it is the whole's lighting-up (*gzhi-srang*), marred only by an inherent turbulence that on the cosmic, supraconscious level is imaged as an insane demiurge and on the anthropic, conscious level is imaged as a monkey—an extraordinarily apt image for the experienter's ego-logical consciousness whimsically, if not mischievously, chasing its fancies. Quite a different world is opened up by passing through the gate through which the light of originary awareness modes dawns upon the experienter.<sup>138</sup> This is what Padmasambhava has to say about this experience.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> The term *zhing-khams* is usually used in connection with the five regents (*rgyal-ba*) presiding over the five points of a mandala, a centered four that adds up to a quincunx. On the indigenous interpretation of the term *zhing-khams* see Herbert Guenther, *The Creative Vision*, p. 56. The three realms in this connection are the “fields” that surround the three bodily felt patterns of experience (see above note 135) as the “excitation” of their respective fields.

<sup>138</sup> Padmasambhava's hermeneutical explication of the term *ye-shes* shows it to operate fluctuationally in view of its being the whole's functionality. In his *sGron-me 'bar-ba*, 2: 318b, he says:

*ye ni ye-nas gnas-pa'i rang-bzhin-la*  
*rtsal-zer yang-lag ngang-dangs rang-brlag shes*  
*des-na ye-shes zhes-par bshad*

One speaks of originary (*ye*) awareness (*shes*) because *ye* means (the whole's) own most unique ability-to-be that has been there since time before time, (in) which

Its disposition to become alight in rays of light that are its functionality becoming (the whole's) branchings and to dissolve by itself, (is what is) meant by *shes*.

Strictly speaking *ye* means the moment when wholeness passes from its virtual state into its actual state or eigenstate, its own (*rang*) most unique ability-to-be (*bzhin*).

<sup>139</sup> *sNying-po bcud-spungs*, 2: 340a–340b:

*de-nas yang ye-shes brdar gsungs-pa*  
*'ja'-tshon 'od-glog-gi rta-pho-la*  
*dangs-gsal ngang-dangs-kyi mis zhon-nas*  
*g.yas-su nyi-ma thogs*  
*g.yon-du zla-ba thogs*  
*ral-gri glad-la bskor*

Now, (the working of) the ordinary awareness mode(s) will be shown  
 by way of symbols:  
 Riding on a stallion (that is the) lightning flashing in the (five-colored)  
 light of a rainbow,  
 A human person of an overly brilliant (appearance) and a disposition  
 to be (permanently) alight,<sup>140</sup>  
 Held the sun in his right hand,  
 Held the moon in his left hand, and  
 Brandished a sword over his head.  
 Having killed with a dagger the turbulence (*rlung*), the ripples (*chu-  
 gnyer*), and the monkey (*spre'u*)<sup>141</sup>

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*spu-gris rlung dang chu-gnyer spre'u bsad-nas*  
*chos-dbyings snying-po 'dus-ma-byas-kyi lha-khang-du phyin-pas*  
*ka-dag ye-gdangs-kyi lha dang 'phrad-pas*  
*dngos-med rnal-ma ka-dag zang-kar gyur*  
*yid-rig sems-blo dran-rtog ngang-dangs snying-po ma dang 'phrad*  
*'khrul-pa rtsad-nas chod*  
*ye-shes rang-sa zin*  
*snang-ba rang-sar grol*  
*snying-po klong-nas shar*  
*ye-shes dbyings-su thim*  
*'gyur-med rgya-yis thebs*  
*dug-gsum sdong-po chod*  
*'gro-drug g.yang-sa gcad*  
*'khor-ba dong-nas sbrugs*  
*srid-pa ru-nas bzlog*  
*nor-bu rin-chen rnyed*  
*mun-rum nang-du nyi-zla shar*  
*dug-la sngags thebs*  
*gser-'gyur-rtsi dang ldan*  
*zas-kyi bcud 'thung*  
*bde-chen klong-du nyal*  
*nor-gyi dbyig rnyed zad-med gter-la spyod*  
*ka-dag don rtogs 'gro-drug g.yang-sa gcad*  
*dngos-med gdeng rnyed sangs-rgyas 'khor-ba med*  
*rang-sar rang-grol chags-sdang ming yang med*  
*yul-[340b] sems gzung-'dzin dgag-bsgrub dbye-bsal med*  
*dgra-gnyen phyogs-ris spang-len rtsis-gdab med*  
*dug-lnga rtsad-gcad 'khor-ba'i ming yang med*  
*zhe-'dod bya-bisal rtsad-bcad 'bad-rtsol med*  
*ces gsungs-so*  
*ye-shes 'char-sgo brdar bstan-pa'o*

<sup>140</sup> *dvangs-gsal ngang-dangs*. These terms born out of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) are extremely difficult to render adequately. We have met the expression *ngang-dangs* before and paraphrased it as (an individual's) disposition to become alight or as his luminescent dimensionality. *dvangs-gsal* intimates the clarity and brilliance of the elemental forces ('*byung-ba*) that constitute the individual's psychosomatic existence.

<sup>141</sup> The turbulence (*rlung*) that, as we have seen, makes the demiurge an insane person is the same that makes a person's consciousness a monkey (*spre'u*) who attempts to

He came to a temple that was the dimension where thoughts and meanings are born (*chos-dbyings*), the (whole's) energy (*snying-po*), and not some (fictitious) construction ('*dus-ma-byas*).

There having met a divine figure (*lha*) that was the primordial effulgence of (the whole's) symbolic pregnancy

He became (this) immateriality and stillness, (the whole's) symbolic pregnancy with nothing (between it and him).<sup>142</sup>

When his ego-logical mind and (its attendant) agitation (*yid-rig*), his overall psychic disposition (toward ego-centricity) and (its emergent) intellect (*sems-blo*), as well as his organismic mind and (its evolving) conceptualization tendencies (*dran-rtog*)<sup>143</sup> had met the (whole's) disposition to be alight (*ngang-dangs*), the (whole's) energy (*snying-po*), their mother (*ma*),<sup>144</sup>

(His chance of ever again) going astray had been completely eradicated.

(When, now, the whole's) originary awareness (modes) hold to what is their own most unique place

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grasp the elusive patterns of his/its "objective" world that are like ever-changing ripples (*chu-gnyer*).

<sup>142</sup> The decisive terms in this line—*ngos-med rnal-ma ka-dag zang-ka*—form a string of symbols, each of which follows the other in the manner and order in which they "light up" and become associated in immediate experience.

<sup>143</sup> These six "facets" of what we loosely call "consciousness" or "mind" characterize one's representational mode of thinking that is "objectifying" by isolating features of world experience for control by a subject. The paradox of this subject-object division is that, while the subject may believe itself to be in control of and to dominate the object(s), it is the object(s) that control the subject. Padmasambhava's insight has clearly seen this paradox when he, in his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 22a, declares:

*yid-rig sems-blo dran-rtog-gis*  
*gang-la'ang rtog-dpyod ma-bcug-pas*  
*chos-can sna-tshogs rang-grol 'gyur*

By not imposing one's *yid-rig sems-blo dran-rtog*

On anything that one may select for discursive thinking

The various postulates dissolve by themselves.

Within this context we may refer to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's insightful words:

Du glaubst zu schieben und du wirst geschoben

(You think you're pushing, but it's you who's being pushed)

*Faust I*, "Walpurgis Night," v. 4117

and to the *Maximen* by La Rochefoucauld, antedating Goethe's words by about twenty-six years:

L'homme croit souvent se conduire lorsqu'il est conduit

(Man often believes to lead, while he is being led).

<sup>144</sup> Note the differentiation-without-separation between the (masculine) *lha*, the primordial effulgence of the (whole system's) intensity and the (feminine) unfolding of the (whole system's) energy. This certainly is a severe blow to the Westerner's (pathological) overevaluation of the masculine *nous* or *logos* or "reason."

(The whole's) lighting-up dissolves in what is its own most unique place.<sup>145</sup>

(When, furthermore, the whole's) energy, from the perspective of its vortex (character), comes into full presence

The (whole's) originary awareness (modes) subside in the dimension (where thoughts and meanings are born).

When this (experience) is sealed with (the whole's) invariance,

Fell the tree of the three poisons and

The abyss that is the six forms of existence is going to be abolished.

Samsara (*'khor-ba*), from the perspective of its being a hole (for prisoners), has been (stirred up and) brushed off,

The (triple) interpreted world (*srid-pa*),<sup>146</sup> from the perspective of its being a (triple) brigade, has been put to rout.

The precious Jewel has been won.

In (your) obscurity and darkness sun and moon have risen.

Poison has been neutralized by having put a spell on it.

You possess the formula to turn base metal into gold.

You drink the elixir (of immortality found in your) food.

You sleep in the vortex of bliss supreme.

Having won the wealth-bestowing jewel you enjoy an inexhaustible treasure.

Having understood the meaning of symbolic pregnancy you have abolished the abyss that is the six forms of existence.

Having won the assurance of immateriality there is neither spiritual wakefulness nor (its opposite) samsara.

Having dissolved by oneself in one's own most unique place there do no longer exist attachment and aversion, even by name;

The (duality of) regions of cognition and the cognizing mind (*yul-sems*), of the apprehendable and the apprehending (*gzung-'dzin*), of negation and affirmation (*dgag-bsgrub*), of separation and elimination (*dbye-bsal*) does not exist;

The biasedness and partiality (expressing itself in the notions of) enemy and friend as well as the craftiness (one) uses in rejecting and accepting someone or something does not exist;

Once the five poisons have been eradicated, the name of samsara does not exist.

Once the obsessive urge to do something has been eradicated, the effort to effect something does not exist.

<sup>145</sup> The "own most unique place" (*rang-sa*) is the dimension where thoughts and meanings are born (*dbyings, chos-(kyi) dbyings*).

<sup>146</sup> The three interpretations of the experienced world are its being a world of desire, a world of aesthetic forms, and a world of no-form. Each interpretation is seen as a brigade (*ru*) assaulting and attempting to corrupt the immediacy of lived experience.

This is a presentation of the gate through which (the whole's) original awareness (modes) dawn (upon the experiencer) by way of symbols.

There are a number of recurring symbols in Padmasambhava's presentation of how the experiencer happens to find himself in the precarious situation of either losing himself or finding himself by growing into the fullness of his and his universe's being. One such symbol is the "temple" (*lha-khang*) that in its nothingness-brilliance is more of the nature of a mystery from which we as its experiencers set out and which remains with us in all our phases of growth or shrinkage. Another symbol is the "rider," the whole's unfolding "intelligence," imaged as a human person (*mi*) on a "stallion" (*rtapho*) whose racing reflects the speed, the storminess, the vehemence, and turbulence (*rlung*) with which the instinctual-emotional stratum in us moves. Both the "rider" and the "stallion" partake of the nature of light (*'od*), experienced in various degrees of intensity and in a burst of colors, and, reflecting a kind of tension within the light itself, illustrate the principle of complementarity on which Padmasambhava's anthropic orientation is based. This principle is again intimated in the climaxing of the individuation process, subtly alluded to in the image of a divine figure (*lha*), carrying with it the idea of masculinity, and the image of the dimension where meanings are born (*dbyings*), not only carrying with it the idea of femininity, but expressly stated to be a mother (*ma*) to whom the child returns after his/her escapade.

The individuation process that starts from the inarticulated mystery that we are—"before there was any name"—climaxes in an even greater, inarticulatable mystery—"there is no longer any name"—the working of which we sense through symbols.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SYMBOLS (*BRDA'*): THE LUMINOUS LANGUAGE OF BEING—SIMILES (*DPE*): INTERPRETIVE POINTERS TO BEING

#### *Introductory remarks*

Whether we think of a symbol and, in a broader context, the symbolic, in terms of Carl Gustav Jung as the best possible expression of an inner experience, or in terms of Gilbert Durand, as the epiphany of a mystery, the symbol is, in the very moment of its emergence, its own luminous self-manifestation, or as Padma-sambhava would say, both image (what is meant) and language in the widest sense of the word (what is said, by word of mouth or gesture). This basic doubleness becomes a direct challenge when the symbol in the form of an allegory, addresses itself to the listening seer, the more so as the border between symbol and allegory remains tantalizingly fluid all the time.

From the perspective of the listening seer, the symbolic-allegorical is already a mode of dealing with a topic that is of paramount significance for him. As a matter of fact, this significance impresses itself on him directly by virtue of its being rooted in the very depth of his spiritual being (*thugs*) that through self-presentation in the form of a luminous image (*sku*) also “speaks” to him in a language (*gsung*) that antedates ordinary speech. Thus Padmasambhava states:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 344a:

*dngos-po gshis-kyi gnas-lugs ni*  
*tshig-gi yul-du ma-gyur kyang*  
*ma-rtogs blo-la mtshon-pa'i phyir*  
*gsung-gi sgron-ma gsal-ba-yis*  
*yang-gsang bcud-kyi snying-po bshad*

Although the abiding (and pervasive) presence of (Being's) dynamic nothingness in the concrete (reality of ours) is not amenable to (being reduced to some) verbal realm,<sup>2</sup>

I speak of (its) energy, the quintessence of (its) mystery that is (greater and deeper than any other) mystery,

(By way of) the shining lamp of (Being's existential) language<sup>3</sup>

In order to give an idea of it to a (person's) mind who has no understanding (of it),

and in slightly more explicit terms he again states:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The technical term *dnegos-po gshis-kyi gnas-lugs* is a contraction of two contrasting ideas; the one is *dnegos-po* "(any) particular existent," be it an external object, an internal "object" or ego-logical subject, as we would say, and the background from which the external and the internal derive in forming a complementarity; the other is *gshis*, otherwise termed *stong-nyid* "the whole's nothingness" in the sense of what we now call "the zero-point energy of the vacuum." See Arthur Zajonc, *Catching the Light*, p. 327:

Where before the vacuum had been understood as pure emptiness—no matter, no light, no heat—now there was a residual hidden energy. Take away everything, cool to absolute zero in temperature, and still the vacuum remains, and it is shimmering with a special kind of light.

It may be of interest to point out that Padmasambhava very rarely uses the term *stong-(pa)-nyid* (corresponding to the Sanskrit word *sūnyatā* used by the Indian-Buddhist logicians and systematically misunderstood and mistranslated as "emptiness" by Western scholars and their Eastern imitators), and if, always in connection with "light" (*gsal*). Instead he uses *med* "the non-existent, the No, the not" to refer to Being as wholeness, and *chos-nyid* "(the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings" to refer to Being's dynamics. Thus he says in his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 20b:

*ye med kun-'byung stong-pa-nyid*  
*chos-nyid gting-mtha' yangs-pa yin*

The primordial non-existent (as the whole's) nothingness from which (our) experienceable universe arises

Is (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, vast in its depth and width,

and

*cang med cir snang cir ma-grub*  
*chos-nyid gting-mtha' yangs-pa yin*

The absolutely non-existent lights up as any thing without being any thing:

This is (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, vast in depth and width.

Lastly, in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 28a, he lists *stong-pa-nyid* as one of the five "characteristics" of Being's giving birth to thoughts/meanings, the other four being its ceaselessness (*ma-'gags-pa*), its non-duality (*gnyis-su med-pa*), its flawlessness (*dri-ma med-pa*), and its unimpededness (*thogs-pa med-pa*).

<sup>3</sup> The use of the term *gsung* is highly significant. It intimates the closure of Being onto itself and becoming "anthropic." We must never forget Padmasambhava's major concern with the question of how wholeness becomes Man/human. In this closing-in onto itself *gsung* is Being's existential language, not the chatter of those who have moved away from their humanity.

<sup>4</sup> *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 347b:

Although in the energy (that is Being in its) symbolic pregnancy  
 There is neither origination nor cessation,  
 It is the brilliantly shining lamp of (Being's existential) language that  
 Shows (this energy) to a person of highest (visionary) acumen.<sup>5</sup>

*snying-po ka-dag rang-bzhin-la*  
*skye dang 'gag-pa gnyis med kyang*  
*gsung-gi sgron-ma rab-gsal-ba*  
*yang-rab-rnams-la bstan-pa ni*

<sup>5</sup> Here a few words may be said about the implied triple gradation of humankind's intellectual-spiritual capacity. Contrary to all modern attempts at levelling out there are, as the Buddhists never failed to emphasize, persons of high, mediocre, and low intellectual capacities and visionary-spiritual acumens. To the question how this difference has come about, Padmasambhava has given an answer that the "modern mind" cannot ignore or simply brush aside. In his *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 301b, he says:

*snying-po'i don ni rang-bzhin gcig mod kyang*  
*rtsal-snang yang-lag mi-'dra-bas*  
*dbang-po rab 'bring tha-ma gsum-du 'byung*

The meaning of energy is such that while in its being-what-it-is remains one and the same,

It is due to the dissimilarity in the manifestation of its functionality, its branchings,  
 That the triple (division into) high, mediocre, and low intellectual capacities comes about.

Padmasambhava has taken up this topic of a triple division in humankind's acumen and bluntly states in his *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 325b–326a:

*dnagos-po gshis-kyi gnas-lugs-la*  
*'khrul dang ma-'khrul ming med de*  
*gnyis-'dzin blo-la 'khrul-pa byung*  
*ma-rtogs rigs-drug 'khrul-bcas-pa*  
*rab 'bring tha-ma gsum-du bshad*  
*skal-ldan rab-kyi yang-rab-la*  
*'khrul-pa rtsad gcod mi-dgos te*  
*'khrul-par shes—[326a]-pas snang-ba ldog*  
*ka-dag mal-ma zang-ka-la*  
*sgro-skur chos-rnams ga-la yod*  
*sems-nyid mu-med gting-yangs 'di*  
*shes-shing rig-pa'i yul-las-'das*  
*sus kyang smra-bsam bstan-du med*

In the abiding (and pervasive) presence of (Being's) dynamic nothingness in the concrete (reality of ours)

There does not exist (even so much as) a name for errancy or non-errancy;

Errancy originates in (one's) intellect that believes in duality.

The six kinds of living beings who have no understanding (of Being) and are affected by (the notions of their) errancy,

Are said (to fall into the) three categories of high, mediocre, and low (intellectual capacities).

A person who is so fortunate as to belong to the highest level in the high category

Need not (laboriously) eradicate his errancy:

By recognizing his errancy as errancy he returns to the light (from which he has strayed).

How can there be any positive or negative imputations in

From the perspective of the wholeness of Being this existential language is the resounding voice of the whole's nothingness:<sup>6</sup>

In the citadel [that is the immensity of] the sky [in its dynamics as a] vortex, pure-in-its-presencing-for-us (as visionary experiencers), Being's own most unique ability-to-be is a plane of consistency,<sup>7</sup>

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(Being's) symbolic pregnancy, quietude, and dissipative clarity?  
Thinking's thinking that is without limitations and deep and wide  
Is beyond the reach of representational cognition and thought.  
No one (has ever been able) to speak and think of it, or even to demonstrate it.

<sup>6</sup> *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 325a:

*mkha'-klong nam-dag pho-brang-na*  
*gzhi-yi rang-bzhin mnyam-pa'i ngang*  
*de-nas kun-'byung mdzod-po che*  
*thog-mar ye-shes 'char-sgo ni*  
*mkha'-las 'byung-ba'i cho-'phrul ltar*  
*dbyings-na rang-byung dbyings-la gnas*  
*nam-mkha'i ngang-las stong-nyid sgra*  
*mtshungs-med rgya-che zab-don bsrogs*

<sup>7</sup> I have borrowed the phrase "plane of consistency" from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 70. "Consistency" is a recurrent idea in the context of the abiding and pervasive presence of Being's dynamic nothingness in the concrete reality of ours. This line and the next occur almost verbatim in a lengthy passage in Padmasambhava's *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 344a:

*ye-nas thog-ma med-pa'i bar-do-na*  
*ma-phyed mi-phyed snying-po mnyam-pa-nyid*  
*gzhi-yi rang-bzhin yod med mnyam-pa'i ngang*  
*mnyam-pa'i ngang-las kun-'byung mdzod-po che*  
*nam-dag bsam-gyis mi-khyab lha-khang-na*  
*stong-gsal ngang-dangs rin-chen bzhugs*  
*rin-chen ngang-gsal 'khor-gyis bskor*  
*dgos-'dod kun-'byung rin-chen 'chang*

In the in-between [of the *ngos-po* and the *gshis*] that has had no beginning since time before time,

Unbroken and unbreakable, (Being's) energy (in its) consistency [with itself and everything else], is,

(As) Being's own most unique ability-to-be, a plane of consistency (concerning) the existent and the non-existent.

Out of this plane of consistency (there emerges) the great treasure (that is our) experienceable world.

(There) in a temple, pure-in-its-presencing-for-us (as visionary experiencers) and unfathomable by representational thought,

Resides the precious jewel (of Being's) nothingness-*qua*-radiance, the dimensionality and disposition of which is to become alight (*ngang-dangs*).

Surrounded by an entourage (that is this) precious jewel's dimensionality and disposition (having become fully) alight (*ngang-gsal*).

(It) holds [firmly] to the precious jewel [as the source of its] experienceable world that grants whatever it desires.

(From which, [eventually] there emerges) the great treasure [that is our] experienceable world.<sup>8</sup>  
 At the very beginning (of this emergence) the gate through which (Being's) originary awareness shines, (opens)—  
 (And what it becomes aware of by throwing its light on it) is like the phantasmata that emerge from the sky and,  
 Having originated from its field-(like dimension) stay in this dimension;  
 From out of its dimensionality (that is the immensity) of the sky (Being's) nothingness  
 Announces (our) incomparable, prodigious reality.

This reference to a voice is particularly significant. It introduces a kind of personal relationship between the listener who is in search of what is his ultimate reality and the "higher" reality that announces the presence of this ultimate reality in the searcher. Padmasambhava employs the simile of a shining lamp without which the searcher would merely fumble around in his endeavour to find what he has lost, and then subtly contrasts the feeling of frustration of not finding what one wants, with the sense of wonder that goes with the ultimate recovery of what one has lost, owing to the lamp's illuminating power. These are his words:<sup>9</sup>

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From a literary point of view this stanza is one of Padmasambhava's many masterpieces of poetic diction, a blend of the indigenously Tibetan, seven-syllable trochee and the Indian verbal figure, known as *yamaka* (*zung-ldan* in Tibetan), a peculiar repetition of a group of syllables, which may take place either mediately or immediately or both ways. In addition, not only does this stanza reflect the experience of a world of light, it also subtly "speaks" of the initial situation from which the process of becoming Man/human starts. The most crucial part is contained in the last three lines—the preciousness (*rin-chen*) of Being as a dynamic nothingness that in its nothingness is an intense light tending to move out of its "virtual" state into its "actual" state, this actual state being, for descriptive purposes called its "entourage" and, in a sense, the nothingness-*qua*-radiance that carries with it the wealth (*rin-chen*) of what is to become our experienceable world.

<sup>8</sup> In the Tibetan term *kun-'byung* the first component *kun* intimates the holistic character of the emergence ('*byung*) of what becomes experienced as World.

<sup>9</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 122b:

*don-dam mtshon dang brjod-las-'das mod kyang*  
*rtsal-gyi rig-pa blo dang sbyar-nas bstan*  
*dper-na mun-nag rdzas stor-la*  
*lag nom btsal-bas rnyed-par dka'*  
*snang-gsal sgron-me-la brten-nas*  
*btsal-bas rnyed-par the-tsom med*  
*de-bzhin ma-rig mun-nag-du*  
*chos-nyid nor-bu stor-ba de*  
*tha-snyad tshig-gis rnyed-par dka'*  
*ma-nor bla-ma'i zhal-drin-gyis*

Our ultimate reality may be beyond pointers and words,  
 (But) the “intelligence” in its functionality will show it according to an  
 individual’s understanding.<sup>10</sup>

For instance, it may be difficult to find some item lost in pitchblack  
 darkness

By groping for it with one’s hands,

But, by relying on the help of a brightly shining lamp,

There is no doubt that one will find what one is looking for.

Similarly, it is difficult to find the Jewel, Being’s giving birth to  
 thoughts/meanings, when lost in the pitchblack darkness of (one’s)  
 unknowing,

By resorting to propositions and words.

But one will find it by the precious symbols

(That flow) from the gracious mouth of the unerring moral imperative  
 [imaged as a person] (*bla-ma*).

A-la-la-ho! What a wondrous message!

*A. The moral imperative: wholeness personified (bla-ma)*

What is to be understood by this “moral imperative,” imaged as a  
 person and, more poignantly stated, being “wholeness personified,”  
 summed up in the single term *bla-ma*, and how does it/he differ  
 from the “teacher” (*ston-pa*) who otherwise occupies the central  
 position in Buddhism? And what precisely is meant by “our ultimate  
 reality” (*don-dam*)?

Before going into the details of what Padmasambhava under-  
 stood by the term *bla-ma*, it can be categorically stated that the idea  
 expressed by this term has nothing to do with what is commonly  
 understood by this term that has become “naturalized” in Western  
 languages in its spelling as “lama.” As a matter of fact, what is so  
 understood by this term is a clear case of the misplaced concreteness  
 of its original meaning, to state it charitably, and a travesty of its  
 original meaning, to state it bluntly. A further point that needs clar-  
 ification is the choice of the word “moral.” In this choice I follow the  
 distinction, made by Erich Jantsch, between ethics and morality to  
 the effect that morality is the very dynamics of a direct inner experi-

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*rin-chen brda-yis rnyed-par 'gyur*  
*a-la-la-ho ngo-mtshar che-ba'i bka'*

<sup>10</sup> The difference between *rig-pa*, in the more technical sense of the word, “the whole’s  
 excitability climaxing in and being the whole’s supraconscious ecstatic intensity,” and  
*blo*, a person’s “intellect” (usually operating on a low level and then called *blo-dman*)  
 should be noted.

ence that becomes interpreted (or misinterpreted, depending on your understanding or lack of understanding) as a set of laws, rules of behavior, and taboos.<sup>11</sup>

Padmasambhava's idea of the moral imperative is, on the basis of his process-oriented thinking and in his own words, a sequence of process structures.<sup>12</sup> He opens his disquisition with the challenging statement:<sup>13</sup>

Although (the whole's) energy in its being its own most unique ability-to-be has no origin (whatsoever) and (remains) invariant, Its branchings, due to (the whole's) functionality (that is its inherent "intelligence,"<sup>14</sup> are spoken of as (aspects of the) moral imperative. rDor-je-sems-dpa',<sup>15</sup> keep the following in mind: In speaking of one's mind (in its being the intensity of thinking's thinking)<sup>16</sup> as the moral imperative (It is understood as) having nine aspects, (each) a moral imperative (in its own right).

The nine moral imperative "aspects" (*bla-ma*) are grouped in three "sets," each of which contains three members and as such presents a phase in anthropocosmic evolution. The first phase, suggesting, as

<sup>11</sup> Erich Jantsch, "Ethics, Morality, and System Management: An evolutionary perspective" in *Futures* (December 1978), p. 460.

<sup>12</sup> The following is based on his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, of which a shorter and slightly critical version of the relevant chapter is found in the sDe-dge edition (2: 248a–248b) and a larger version in the Thimpu edition (vol. 5, 598–601). Neither version can be said to be satisfactory, together these two editions give a fairly clear picture of what Padmasambhava intended to say. Quotations are based on the sDe-dge edition, rather than the Thimpu edition which abounds in spelling mistakes.

<sup>13</sup> 2: 248a:

*snying-po'i rang-bzhin skyed-med 'gyur-med kyang  
yan-lag rig-pa'i rtsal-gyis bla-mar bshad  
rdo-rje-sems-dpas yid-la zung  
rang-sems bla-mar bshad-pa-la  
de-la bla-ma rnam-pa dgu yod de*

In rendering the Tibetan term *bla-ma* into English by the phrase "moral imperative" for reasons stated above, I use this phrase in both a general and a more individual sense. The Tibetan term *bla-ma* does not say whether it is used in the singular or the plural. Unfortunately our language does not allow us to fuse the singular and plural into a single notion.

<sup>14</sup> On the exact meaning of the term *rig-pa* see above n. 10.

<sup>15</sup> rDo-rje-sems-pa (in Sanskrit Vajrasattva) is the one who from among the audience (*'khor*) asks the teacher (*ston-pa*) "Goodness par excellence" (*kun-tu bzang-po*).

<sup>16</sup> The use of the reflexive pronoun with mind (*rang-sems*) makes it clear that mind (*sems*) is to be understood as thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*). The phrase "one's mind" (*rang-sems*) must not be understood in the sense of one's ego-logical mind that is more of a travesty of thinking's thinking, an aberration (*'khrul-pa*).

we would have to say, an absolute, nonetheless dynamic, transcendence, is described as follows:<sup>17</sup>

There is the moral imperative of Being in its primordially that antedates (any) beginning (*ye-thog*),

There is the moral imperative of (Being-as-a)-vortex (that, too, antedates any) beginning, all-encompassing (*kun-khyab*), and

There is the moral imperative (that is the) nonduality of Being in its primordially that antedates (any) beginning (*thog*) and of (Being-as-a)-vortex (that, too, antedates any) beginning, (all)-encompassing (*khyab*).

In view of the fact that Padmasambhava was well acquainted with Gnostic ideas, the possibility that his reference to a pre-beginning in connection with the super being was inspired by the Valentinians cannot be gainsaid. According to Ptolemy, himself a Valentinian thinker, the Valentinians had assumed a

pre-existent, perfect aeon, whom they also call Pre-beginning, Forefather, and Primal Cause.<sup>18</sup>

But the decisive point is that, even if he borrowed the idea of a pre-beginning from others, he tempered it with his own idea of complementarity in a dynamic perspective, expanding a binary interaction into a ternary relationship.

The next phase in the evolution of the process structure of the moral imperative is its actual beginning, the transition from a pre-beginning to an actual beginning being extremely fluid. Padmasambhava describes this phase in the following words:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 2: 248a:

*ye-thog gzhi-yi bla-ma dang*  
*ye-klong kun-khyab bla-ma dang*  
*thog-khyab gnyis-med bla-ma 'o*

<sup>18</sup> Quoted from Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 62. So also, the idea of a "forefather" (*spyi-mes*) is met with in Padmasambhava's *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 29a (see also above Chapter One, p. 65), and in his *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 348a:

*kun-'byung klongs-yangs lha-khang-du*  
*sems-can spyi-mes rig-pa'i rgyal*  
*snang-srid bskyed kyang 'phel-'grib med*

In a temple that is the ever-widening vortex from which everything arises  
There (resides) the forefather of the living beings, the king who is (the whole's)  
"intelligence;"

Although he has created whatever lights up and is interpreted (i.e. the phenomenal world), there is no increase or decrease (in it and in its beings).

<sup>19</sup> 2: 248a:

There is the moral imperative of Being as a beginning,  
 There is a moral imperative of (Being's) presencing (itself as Being's)  
 ceaseless functionality, and  
 There is the moral imperative of the nonduality of Being and function-  
 ality.

The third and final phase in the evolution of the moral imperative process structure is its/His becoming Man/human in the sense that we as humans are Him (the whole) and only part of Him (the whole), with the implication of a subtle shift having occurred from a Him to a Her. Let us remind ourselves of the fact that the moral imperative is basically the whole's (Being's) energy (*snying-po*) that may be experienced by us as the gender-specific embodiments of an over-all energy having masculine and/or feminine traits, but that is irreducible to any one trait, and in being interpreted thus is already a misinterpretation (when taken too literally). In a beautiful simile Padmasambhava declares:<sup>20</sup>

(Being's) energy, (from the perspective of) its own most unique ability-to-be (that is, to be) a mother, remains unruffled;  
 (Energy's) branchings, the children, not understanding (Being's own most unique reality of being their mother) enter the world of sundry objects [and look for her where she is not].

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*thog-ma gzhi-yi bla-ma dang*  
*ma-'gags rtsal-snang bla-ma dang*  
*gzhi-rtсал gnyis-med bla-ma'o*

<sup>20</sup> 2: 253ab:

*snying-po ma-yi rang-bzhin g.yos-pa med*  
*yan-lag bu-yis ma-rtogs sna-tshogs yul-la 'jug*

and, then, varying this theme and giving it a "happy ending" in his *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 329a, he says:

*snying-po bcud-'dus ma-yi dbyings*  
*mkha'-gsal 'od-gsal bu-yi dangs*  
*snying-po'i klong-du rang-byung bu*  
*rtсал-zer ma-'phros ma-la thim*  
*ma bu ngo-sprod ye sangs-rgyas*

In the dimensionality of (Being's) energy in which its elixir is gathered, the mother,  
 The brilliant light of the radiant sky is the lustre of her child;  
 Self-originated in the vortex of this energy, the child,  
 As the ray of light of (the energy's) functionality, does not rush forth but submerges  
 in (its) mother:

(This mutual) recognition of mother and child is the dissipation (of unknowing's darkness) and expansion (of Being's luminosity) in (the whole's) primordially.

This third and final phase in the evolution of the moral imperative into what is now our “Man/human being” moral imperative is summed up in the following words:<sup>21</sup>

There is the moral imperative of the anthropic whole’s potential (in us as our ontic foundation, *kun-gzhi*),<sup>22</sup> the general background (of one’s spiritual life, *yongs-khyab*),<sup>23</sup>

There is the moral imperative of what is (this foundation-potential’s) bursting forth in rays of light (that are its) spiritual excitability/excitation (*zer-rig*), ceaselessly operating, and

There is the moral imperative of the nonduality of the foundation-potential and (its) excitability/excitation (*kun-rig*).

Complicating matters even more Padmasambhava continues speaking of these nine moral imperative “aspects” as dynamic régimes in terms of their subtle nuances within each of their three major sets. Thus he says of the first set of three:<sup>24</sup>

The moral imperative of Being in its primordially that antedates (any) beginning does not turn into an object of the eight perceptual patterns<sup>25</sup> and hence

<sup>21</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 248a:

*kun-gzhi yongs-khyab bla-ma dang*  
*zer-rig ma-'gags bla-ma dang*  
*kun-rig gnyis-med bla-ma'o*

<sup>22</sup> On the meaning of this technical term see also above Chapter One, p. 67 n. 64.

<sup>23</sup> It is of utmost importance to note the difference between *kun* in *kun-gzhi*, literally rendered “all-ground,” as a basically ontological concept, and *yongs* in *yongs-khyab* as a basically psychological concept. In order to emphasize this difference I have rendered *yongs-khyab* by “the general (*yongs*) background (encompassingness, *khyab*) of one’s spiritual life.” To a certain extent this concept is similar to C. G. Jung’s notion of the “collective unconscious,” provided we substitute the phrase “stratum of the psyche” for the unfortunate and misleading term “unconscious.”

<sup>24</sup> 2: 248a:

*ye-thog gzhi'i bla-ma des*  
*tshogs-brgyad yul-du ma-gyur-pa'i*  
*dmigs dang bral-ba'i chos-rnams ston*

*ye-klong kun-khyab bla-ma des*  
[*'byed-pa med-pa'i chos-rnams bstan*] (This line is said to have been missing in the source on which the sDe-dge edition is based, it has been supplied from the Thimpu edition)

*thog-khyab gnyis-med bla-ma des*  
*ma-phyed ma-gol chos-rnams bstan*

<sup>25</sup> This is a reference to the mentalistic Yogācāra (Vijñānavāda) system that does not measure up to Being’s absolute transcendence of which Padmasambhava speaks in terms of his *spyi-ti* and *yang-ti* experiences.

Presents (itself/himself as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items) in its (as yet) non-referential aspect.

The moral imperative of (Being-as-a)-vortex (that, too, antedates any) beginning, all-encompassing,  
 [Presents (itself/himself as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items) by not introducing any division].

The moral imperative (that is the) nonduality of Being in its primordiality that antedates any beginning and of (Being-as-a)-vortex (that, too, antedates any beginning, (all)-encompassing,

Presents (itself/himself as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items) as an undivided, un-deviative whole.

The triple dynamics of the pre-beginning that Padmasambhava attempts to “describe” and relate to us as its experiencers, imperceptibly becomes the dynamics that pervades the universe of which we and everything are an inalienable aspect. This dynamics that “now” has a “beginning,” benefits from the whole that is Being itself. This universe, the moral imperative, thus ushered in, is still the sheer dynamism of energy and functionality. In the words of Padmasambhava:<sup>26</sup>

The moral imperative of Being as a beginning  
 Presents (itself/himself as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items in terms of) invariant energy,

The moral imperative of (Being’s) presencing (itself as Being’s) ceaseless functionality

Presents (itself/himself as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items in terms of their) having neither a (specifiable) beginning nor end,

The moral imperative of the nonduality of Being and functionality

<sup>26</sup> 2: 248a:

*thog-ma gzhi-yi bla-ma des*  
*snying-po 'gyur-med chos-rnams bstan*  
*ma-'gags rtsal-snang bla-ma des*  
*skye-'gag med-pa'i chos-rnams bstan*  
*gzhi-rtsal gnyis-med bla-ma des*  
*rtsis-gdab med-pa'i chos-rnams bstan*

Presents (itself/himself as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items in terms of their) unpremeditatedness.

Padmasambhava's way of thinking which unlike other contemporary ways of thinking, was thoroughly process-oriented, did not develop and exist in a vacuum. Since he was well acquainted with Gnostic ideas such as a pre-beginning and a forefather, his emphasis on unpremeditatedness may well imply a critique of the Gnostic idea of a Demiurge, Creator of humankind, the Creative God who, after all, was but an artificer with an inordinate sense of egoness—"I am God, and there is no other beside me."<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the moral imperative, the universe as sheer dynamism of energy and functionality, becomes us as our Man/human being, the center of Padmasambhava's process-and human-oriented thinking. Padmasambhava has the following to say about this phase:<sup>28</sup>

The moral imperative of the anthropic whole's potential (as) the general background (of one's spiritual life)

Presents (itself/himself) as the archetypal mother, the primal source of what is the background (of our spiritual life),

The moral imperative (of this whole) in its ceaselessly (flashing) rays of light that are its excitations/ecstatic intensities

Presents (its wholeness) as the multiplicity of what is to become the (anthropic) world with its juxtaposed items *sub specie* of their unbiasedness,

The moral imperative of the nonduality of the whole's potential and its ecstatic intensities

Presents (the whole's dynamism of its) functionality submerging in (what is referred to as) Being (or the whole) and becoming (the whole's) indivisibility.

<sup>27</sup> A lucid account of the Sethian (Gnostic) and Christian exegetical traditions concerning the Biblical statement "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image and likeness'" is given by Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, pp. 87ff. It needs hardly be pointed out that this pathological concern with the ego is still rampant today all over the world in all our models of the physical, social, and cultural domains.

<sup>28</sup> 2: 248a:

*kun-gzhi spyi-khyab bla-ma des*  
*kun-gzhi'i 'byung-gnas yum-du bstan*  
*zer-rig ma-'gags bla-ma des*  
*rgya-chad phyogs-med chos-rnams bstan*  
*kun-rig gnyis-med bla-ma des*  
*gzhi-la rtsal-thim dbyer-med bstan*

Two points deserve special attention. The first point is that with all the emphasis on thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*) as sheer intensity, the background (*kun-gzhi*) of what is to become or already operates as the dimensionality of thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*), a closure into the "collective" stratum of the psyche (*spyi-khyab*) from the "holistic" (all)-encompassing dynamics (*kun-khyab*) of the whole as energy and functionality, is stated to be the archetypal mother (*yum*). This image, together with the frequently used image of the "child returning to its mother,"<sup>29</sup> suggests that on the imaginal (psychological-mythological) level Padmasambhava's thinking is matrifocal, not patrifocal. But such a suggestion runs the risk of being mistaken as a literal reduction and losing sight of the overall process character of the moral imperative, which is irreducible to any one interpretation.

The second point, seemingly more difficult to assess, is this undeniably feminine aspect of the moral imperative in the context of our overall psychic life. Maybe this difficulty is merely prompted by our gender-specific language that makes us think of the moral imperative as a masculine entity compounded by our obsessive notion of a One. But not only is the Tibetan language not so gender-specific as are our Western languages, it also is not so number-specific, as we have noted on several occasions. It is therefore not possible to see in this feminine aspect of the moral imperative a direct or tacit reference to the Protенnoia, the First Thought of the Father, who in the *Trimorphic Protенnoia* proclaims:<sup>30</sup>

I am androgynous. [I am Mother and] Father since [I copulate] with myself. I [copulated] with myself [and with those who love] me, [and] it is through me alone that the All [stands firm].

Moreover, this feminine aspect of the moral imperative emerges at the end of a long evolutionary process, beginning with a triune level of absolute transcendence and passing through a triune (dynamic) level of energy and functionality, prefiguring, as it were, the male-female complementarity in our (psycho-physical) closure that in its closure remains open to the dynamics of the whole. Padmasambhava's evolutionary idea of the moral imperative in which none of its "facets" is in any way subordinate to any other facet, is not an absolute, the moral imperative evolves itself—he/she/it is

<sup>29</sup> See above p. 135 n. 20.

<sup>30</sup> In *The Nag Hammadi Library*, XIII.1.45.2–3.

evolution in which the “teacher” (*ston-pa*), the spiritual center of the proto-spatio-temporal complexity of our being humans, is an emergent structure that in its newly found identity remains symbiotically linked to the larger whole and as such is and conveys an inner awareness that in the manner of an inner voice makes it possible that a person will have to face up to moral issues that ultimately derive from self-responsibility and its attendant respect of life.

The dynamics of this moral imperative is summed up by Padma-sambhava in his hermeneutical interpretation of its Tibetan term *bla-ma*. Careful attention to his interpretation reveals his awareness of the phases in the evolution of this process structure. For the sake of clarity I have sectioned his disquisition which runs as follows:<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> 2: 249a:

*bla ni yang-dag sangs-rgyas yin*  
*ma ni skye-med rgyu-ru gsungs*  
*bla ni rtsal-snang bu yin ste*  
*ma ni chos-nyid yum-du gsungs*  
*bla ni snying-po chos-sku yin*  
*ma ni 'gyur-med skye-ba med*  
*bla ni rig-pa'i snang-tshul yin*  
*ma ni kun-gzhi spyi-khyab-bo*  
*bla ni spyi-yi mtshan-nyid ste*  
*ma ni 'char-sgo gnyis-su gsungs*  
*bla ni 'khrul-lugs rnam-gsum ste*  
*ma ni gcod-lugs gsum-du gsungs*  
*bla ni dug-gsum nga-bdag-nyid*  
*ma ni sku-gsum shes-rab thabs*  
*bla ni khams-gsum 'khor-ba ste*  
*ma-yis de-rnams sdug-bsngal sgrol*  
*bla ni sdug-bsngal brgyad-khri ste*  
*ma-yis de-rnams bde-chen skyobs*  
*bla ni skye rgas na 'chi ste*  
*ma-yis chu-bo'i gzhi-rtsa chod*  
*bla ni gnyis-'dzin thams-cad ste*  
*ma-yis gzung-'dzin gnyis-las grol*  
*bla ni snang-srid yul-sems gnyis*  
*ma ni gnyis-med dbye-bsal med*  
*bla ni phyi-nang gnyis-med de*  
*ma ni bzang-ngan dgag-bsgrub med*  
*bla ni sgo-lnga yul-lnga yin*  
*ma ni mi-'jug mi-'brid yin*  
*bla ni dkar-dmar sna-tshogs te*  
*ma ni sna-tshogs mi-'dzin zhen-pa med*  
*bla ni bden-pa gnyis-kyi chos*  
*ma ni bden-pa gnyis med-do*

*bla* means the dissipation (of darkness) and the spreading (of light) in a way that is purer than pure,

*ma* means the birthless (and) is said to be the Primal Cause;<sup>32</sup>

*bla* means the lighting-up of the whole's functionality (as the whole's children,

*ma* means (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (and) is said to be the archetypal mother;

*bla* means (the whole's) energy (that in us is the) forestructure of our humanity (that is meaning through and through, *chos-sku*),<sup>33</sup>

*ma* means (the whole's and, by implication, this forestructure's) invariance and birthlessness;

*bla* means the mode in which the (whole's spiritual) excitability lights up,

*ma* means the anthropic whole's potential (in us as our ontic foundation and its being the) general background (of our spiritual life).

*bla* means the specificity of this general (background),

*ma* is said to be the two gates (of which the one is the opening through which the light-that-we-are shines forth and the other is the opening through which we go astray when we become oblivious of the light-that-we-are);

*bla* means the triple mode of going astray,<sup>34</sup>

*ma* is said to be the triple mode of eradicating this going-astray;<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> From a strictly Buddhist perspective this reference to a primal cause (*rgyu*) is quite unusual. In the context of the super being who is so intriguingly similar to the Gnostic idea of the Father who is "ungenerated" (*agennetos*), this placing of the primal cause next to the "birthless," the "no-birth" (*skye-med*), may well be another instance of Padmasambhava's familiarity with Gnostic, specifically Valentinian, ideas. See Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 62.

<sup>33</sup> This technical term is one of the most difficult to interpret. It does not refer to a *thing* or anything that constitutes the repertoire of representational thinking, and what it intimates or "prefigures" is, in my opinion, best summed up by David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*, p. 7:

According to Heidegger, we human beings are "always already" gifted with a pre-ontological understanding (or, in other words, an ontologically attuned pre-understanding) of the presencing of Being as such. By grace of our "ecstatic inherence," our *Befindlichkeit* in (the field of) Being as a whole, we are always, in a way, attuned to this presencing as such, and always find ourselves already implicitly "called," already implicitly claimed, by the potential for development that it lays down and opens up for us. Now, Heidegger interprets this pre-ontological understanding as a "primordial" attunement by (and to) the presencing of Being as a whole (and as such): an attunement of such a primordial nature that our most basic, most universal existential possibilities for a deeper, richer, and more understanding relationship with Being i.e., an authentically *ontological* relationship, are always already implicitly laid down for us "from the very beginning."

<sup>34</sup> For details see above Chapter One, p. 46 n. 14.

<sup>35</sup> The eradication of this going-astray comes with an understanding of what the process is in itself.

*bla* means the three poisons (as one's inordinate sense of) an ego or self,

*ma* means the three forestructures of our enworlding (expressing themselves as) discrimination-appreciation and operance.<sup>36</sup>

*bla* means the three levels of worldly existence that make up *samsara*,<sup>37</sup>

*ma* relieves them of their misery and frustration;

*bla* means the eighty-thousand frustrations (of *samsara*),

*ma* preserves (the whole's) ultimate bliss (in them);

*bla* means birth, old age, sickness, and death,

*ma* eradicates the source of these torrents;

*bla* means every belief in duality,

*ma* frees from the duality of the apprehendable and the apprehending;

*bla* means the phenomenal world and its interpretation in terms of an objective domain and a subjective mind,

*ma* means nonduality, the non-existence of separability and eliminability;

*bla* means the non-existence of (something) external and (something) internal,

*ma* means the non-existence of good and evil and of negation and affirmation;

*bla* means the five doors of perception and the five sense objects,

*ma* means not to go into them and not to impose on them;

*bla* means the multiplicity of the biologically determined opposites of male and female,<sup>38</sup>

*ma* means not to appropriate (that is, identify with) either egologically and the non-existence of any passionate involvement;

*bla* means the realities summed up under the (so-called) two truths,<sup>39</sup>

*ma* means the No of these two truths.<sup>40</sup>

In conclusion an intriguing stanza that, on the one hand, shows how fluid the lines between the various phases of the process structure

<sup>36</sup> The three forestructures are the *chos-sku* (see above n. 33), the *longs-sku*, and the *sprul-sku*. Each structure has its own appreciative acumen (*shes-rab*) and operance (*thabs*).

<sup>37</sup> The three levels are the level of sensuality, the level of sensuous, aesthetically appreciated forms, and the level of no-form whatsoever.

<sup>38</sup> Literally "red and white" (*dkar-dmar*). These are the standard terms for the male and female reproductive fluids according to Indo-Tibetan medicine.

<sup>39</sup> These are the commonly accepted realities of ordinary life (*kun-rdzob*) and the higher-order ultimate reality (*don-dam*).

<sup>40</sup> This rendering takes into account Padmasambhava's insistence on the No (*med*). More conventionally this line can be rendered as "*ma* means that these truths do not form a duality."

called *bla-ma* are and, on the other hand, highlights the Buddhist preoccupation with counting, may be quoted:<sup>41</sup>

Thinking's thinking is Being-in-its-beingness as the moral imperative;  
The functionality of (this Being's) presencing and the presencing of  
(this presencing in) rays of light are  
The six-faceted *mahāguru*.

The really intriguing part is in the use of the word *mahāguru* in connection with the term *slob-dpon* "tutor-instructor." He always refers to a concrete human person, who, by implication in the context of this work from which the stanza has been quoted, may well have been Padmasambhava himself. Whether the eulogy is an addition by a later hand, reflecting the high esteem in which the tutor-instructor was held, must be left undecided.<sup>42</sup> But one thing is cer-

<sup>41</sup> 2: 248a:

*sems-nyid gzhi-yi bla-ma'o*  
*snang-rtsal zer-snang bla-ma de*  
*mahāguru drug-tu gsungs*

<sup>42</sup> A few lines later, on fol. 248b, we read:

*slob-dpon mahāguru rnam-drug ni*  
*sangs-rgyas gong-bas gnyen-par gsungs*  
*ci-phyir zhe-na bskal-pa stong-gi sangs-rgyas kyang*  
*guru dag-la bsten-nas rgyas*  
*de-phyir mahāguru rnams*  
*snying dang mig bzhin bkur-bar gyis*  
*phyi-yi guru brten-pa-yis*  
*nang-gi bla-ma gsal-bar 'gyur*  
*byin-rlabs dngos-grub man-ngag rnams*  
*mahāguru-drug-tu gnas*  
*de-phyir slob-dpon gnyen-par gsungs*

The tutor-instructor, (the embodiment of) the six *mahāgurus*,  
Has been said to be one's friend by the spiritually awake ones of yore.  
Why? The spiritually awake ones of a thousand aeons  
Have become spiritually awake by attending their *gurus*.  
Therefore value the *mahāgurus*  
Like your heart and your eyes.  
By attending to the external *guru*  
The inner *bla-ma* will radiate.  
Your becoming "electrified," your attainments, and your inner voice  
Are (the working of) the six-fold *mahāguru*.  
Therefore the tutor-instructor has been declared to be (your) friend.

Lest there be any misconception about the "inner voice" (*man-ngag*) we should remind ourselves of the fact that it is "wholeness itself that speaks." There is a subtle, and yet enormous, difference between *man-ngag* and *gdams-ngag*. The latter term refers to an "injunction" a teacher, in the sense of a "real" teacher and not in that of a mere holder of a diploma, gives to a student. Such a teacher is termed *ston-pa* and "named" *kun-*

tain, we are moving here in a world of an open continuum that any moment may play the role of a symbol or glide off into the concrete that nonetheless remains intertwined with the symbolic from which it derives its meaning. While the symbol and/or the symbolic (*brda'*) speaks directly to the experiencer as already attuned to Being-in-its-beingness, to Being as a whole—"he/she who stands highest amongst those of the highest intellectual-spiritual acumen" (*yang-rab*)<sup>43</sup>—through the moral imperative (*bla-ma*), experienced in human form as our "guardian awareness,"<sup>44</sup> not every person shares this good fortune of sensing his/her attunement to Being. How to make these "unfortunate" individuals aware of their existential potential and ultimate reality? Here, as we shall see below in section d, the simile (*dpe*) begins to play its decisive role.

*B. The mystery-spell (gsang-sngags)  
and its articulation, the symbol (brda')*

The symbol as an "epiphany of a mystery" seemingly stresses the visual at the expense of the auditory. Yet, the symbol has a distinctly audible quality as well, since it is the "language" of the *dākinīs*, inspirational forces that "speak" to the experiencer in moments of ek-static experience (*Erleben*)—"ek-static" here used in the strict sense of the word as "standing outside" the self-imposed closure of the primordial openness of Being-in-its-beingness-as-wholeness. In this *ek-stasis* (not to be confused with some altered state of consciousness which is but the same old "thing"-stuff in different terms), the symbol is a first utterance that could not be more

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*bzang* "goodness *par excellence*." Thus, Padmasambhava states in his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 249a:

*de-nas rdo-rje-sems-dpa'-yis  
kun-bzang-nyid-la 'di-skad zhus  
mahāguru kun-bzang-gis  
bsdus-pa'i gdams-ngag ji-ltar lags*

Then rDo-rje-sems-dpa' asked  
(The Teacher) Goodness *par excellence*:  
What are the injunctions  
Gathered (in himself) by the *mahāguru* Goodness *par excellence*?

<sup>43</sup> This is the standard term used by Padmasambhava. See for instance his *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 347b.

<sup>44</sup> I have borrowed this term from David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*, p. 50.

unlike that of ordinary speech. This is the reason why what the *dākinīs* have to say is so often introduced by what is known (though little understood) as glossolalia that, in the Buddhist (Indo-Tibetan) context, is popularly referred to by the Sanskrit term *mantra*. Its Tibetan equivalent *gsang-sngags* specifically stresses the auditive character.<sup>45</sup> Let us listen to what Padmasambhava has to say about the *gsang-sngags*:<sup>46</sup>

The substance and meaning of *gsang-sngags* is this:

<sup>45</sup> Literally rendered this term means “mystery (*gsang*)-spell/incantation (*sngags*).” From the perspective of the listening experimenter, on hearing this voice of the unknown, he/she feels, quite literally, “spell-bound.” From the perspective of wholeness, Being (the whole) holds the experimenter under its spell.

<sup>46</sup> *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 346b–347a:

*gsang-sngags don-gyi ngo-bo ni*  
*gzung-'dzin skyob-pas gsang-sngags yin*  
*skye-med snying-po bcud-'dus klong*  
*byar-med tha-snyad kun-las grol*  
*snying-po chos-nyid klong-dkyil-na*  
*ka-dag rang-byung ngang-dangs bzhugs*  
*phyi-grol [347a] nang-dag yid-gnyis brlag*  
*rnam-dag snying-po ma-yi klong*  
*ngos-'dzin rtag-pa'i mtha'-rnams gcod*  
*ma-'gag 'od-gsal rang-sangs-pas*  
*gti-mug chad-mtha'-rnams spros gcod*  
*de-yis gzung-bya'i chos-las skyob*  
*kun-gzhi stong-gsal chos-nyid-klong*  
*rtsis-gdab dran-rtog yid-las-'das*  
*de-yis 'dzin-pa'i chos-las skyob*  
*yid-gnyis [instead of the printed nyid] rtsad-gcod gzung-'dzin med*  
*gzung-'dzin-las skyob gsang-sngags yin*  
*rigs-gsum 'chang-ba gsang-sngags 'chang*  
*gsang-sngags-las byung yi-ge med*  
*ming-tsam 'di zhes bstan-pa ni*  
*kun-tu bzang-pos mtshon-du med*  
*ngos-gzung med-pas gsang-ba yin*  
*gsal-shing khyab-pas sngags-pa yin*  
*ngos-po ye-med gsang-ba yin*  
*mtshan-ma sna-tshogs sngags-pa yin*  
*gsang-ba snying-po'i bcud-'dus yin*  
*sngags-pa rang-gsal 'od-gsal yin*  
*don ni gnyis-'dzin spros-pa chod*  
*ngo-bo rang-'bar kun-gsal gdangs*

In the above transliteration I have corrected the scribe's or block-carver's error (*gsal-ba*'i in line 4 from bottom instead of *gsang-ba* in all printed editions). The scribe's error is understandable given the emphasis on the luminosity of what is meant by *gsang-sngags*. Similarly, the scribe's error (*rtog-pa*'i for *rtag-pa*'i) has been corrected on the basis of the well-known contrast between *rtag-mtha*' “eternalism a parte ante” and *chad-mtha*' “eternalism a parte post.”

Since it protects (the experiencer) from (becoming a victim of) the subject-object dichotomy (it is called) *gsang-sngags*.  
(In its being the whole's) no-birth it is the vortex in which the quintessential features of (the whole's) energy are gathered (in primordial unity), and  
(In its being the whole's) no-construability it is free from all predications.  
In the center of this vortex, (the whole's) energy (as its) giving birth to thoughts/meanings,  
There resides (the whole's) symbolic pregnancy, self-originated, disposed to become alight.  
With the dissolutions of the external and the refulgence of the internal the two (kinds of) ego-logical mentation have broken down,<sup>47</sup> (which means that)  
In the vortex of the (whole's) pure, motherly energy  
The extremes of a (postulational) eternalism that believes in particular existents have been cut off and,  
Since (in the presence of the whole's) ceaselessly shining brilliance (spiritual) darkness has dissipated by itself  
The extremes of an (equally postulational) eternalism that believes in the nihility (of particular existents) have been cut off—  
For which reason (the *gsang-sngags*) protects (the experiencer) from the (claims of) the objective.  
(As the experiencer's) ontic foundation, this vortex of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings in its nothingness-radiance,  
(The *gsang-sngags*) lies beyond the scope of ego-logical mentation with its premeditative organismic and conceptual thinking—  
For which reason (the *gsang-sngags*) protects (the experiencer) from the (claims of) the subjective.  
Once these two ego-logical mentations have been cut off at their roots there is no (longer) anything (of the nature of an) object or subject.  
(In brief), protecting (the experiencer) from the subject-object dichotomy is (what is meant by) *gsang-sngags*.  
He who holds to the three resonance domains is held by the *gsang-sngags* (and since this beholdenness)  
Derives from the *gsang-sngags* (itself) there are no linguistic devices (for it):  
Even Kun-tu-bzang-po could not demonstrate it  
By saying so much as "this is it."

<sup>47</sup> The two kinds of ego-logical mentation are the traditional *yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa* (Sanskrit *manovijñāna*) that, as Padmasambhava, in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 29a, informs us, deals with the object-subject dichotomy, the apprehendable and the apprehending (*gzung-'dzin*), and the *nyon-mongs-yid* (Sanskrit *klīṣṭamanovijñāna*) that refers to the assertiveness of the ego in both its perceptual and cognitive situations (*ngar-'dzin*).

Since (the *gsang-sngags*) cannot be grasped (recognized) as something, it is (said to be) a mystery (*gsang*) and, Since it radiates [sonorously] and is (all)-encompassing, it is (said to be) a spell (*sngags*).

Since there have been no particular existents (involved) since time before time, it is (said to be) a mystery and,

Since there is (present) a welter of (particular existents with) defining characteristics, it is (said to be) a spell.

Mystery is the gathering of the quintessential features of the (whole's) energy (in their primordial unity),

Spell is (the whole's) brilliance radiating by itself.

The meaning (of *gsang-sngags*) is the cutting off of the conceptual-propositional proliferations that go with (any) belief in duality and

The substance of *gsang-sngags* is precisely this. (In other words)

Its substance is the radiance of an all-brilliance ablaze in and by itself.

This "packed" passage needs some explication. The first thing to note is the luminous character of this "mystery-spell" that by being a spell reaches into the very being of the experiencing individual who is the whole and yet only a part of it. In this narrowed aspect the whole is designated as the experiencer's ontic foundation (*kun-gzhi*).<sup>48</sup> The whole is not some thing that somehow is "born" or that somehow can be "construed." By their respective terms *skye-med* and *byar-med* Padmasambhava here restates his basic concern with the No, the not, the non-being that language is powerless to interpret—"there are no linguistic devices," as he succinctly states on the basis of his insight that language firmly locks us in the vice of dichotomizing thought that cannot but fragmentize, impoverish, narrow down, and, ultimately, blind us to our very reality with its finely woven web of qualities. The result is that we waste our time (and ourselves) with idle speculations, so well observed and inimitably expressed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

Ich sag' es dir: ein Kerl, der spekuliert,  
Ist wie ein Tier, auf dürrer Heide  
Von einem bösen Geist im Kreis herumgeführt,  
Und ringsherum liegt schöne grüne Weide  
(I tell you this: a guy who speculates  
Is like a beast, on barren ground  
Led around by a malignant spirit,

<sup>48</sup> Literally rendered this term means "all-ground." With Padmasambhava it is always used ambiguously: it may refer to Being as the "ground of all and everything" and to Being's closure as the experiencer's ontic foundation.

While fine green pasture is spreading all around).<sup>49</sup>

Paradoxically, in this ultimate No there are gathered the quintessential features (*bcud*) of the whole's energy. As Padmasambhava states elsewhere these features are our dynamic existentiality (*don*) laid bare in the immediacy of its encounter as the fore-structure of our humanity (*chos-sku*) and its attunement to a wider field of meaning deriving from the whole's giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*).<sup>50</sup> In terms of experience this means our beholdenness to Being by virtue of its three resonance domains that *call* us by putting a spell on us and to which we *listen* by virtue of our *Zugehörigkeit* (beholdenness and attunement) to Being.<sup>51</sup> The up-

<sup>49</sup> *Faust I*, "Study," vs.1830–1833.

<sup>50</sup> In his *Thig-le ye-sheś bcud-spungs sgron-ma 'od-'bar*, 2: 318b–319a, he lets the teacher "No-thing/symbolic pregnance/fore-structure-of-humanity" (*dn̄gos-med ka-dag chos-sku*) give the following explication of the compound *bcud-spungs* "pile of quintessential features" to his disciple "Radiance/purity/preciousness" (*gsal-dag rin-chen*):

*bcud ni snying-po don-gyi bcud*  
*spungs ni skye-'gag-med-par spungs*  
*bcud ni chos-sku 'gyur-med bcud*  
*spungs ni rgyu-rkyen 'pho-'gyur-med*  
*bcud ni chos-nyid snying-po'o*  
*spungs ni rtsol-bsgrub-med-par spungs*

*bcud* means (the whole's) energy (as our) existentiality (in the sense of the whole's) quintessence,

*spungs* means the gathering (of this energy) in its not being something that is born and something that ceases to be;

*bcud* means the fore-structure of (our) humanity as (the whole's) invariant quintessence,

*spungs* means the non-existence of its stepping out of itself or changing into something other than itself due to causes and conditions;

*bcud* means (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (as the whole's ceaselessly active quintessence),

*spungs* means the gathering (of this energy) in its non-existence of efforts and achievements.

In the translation I have replaced the expression *snying-po'o* in the last but one line of the Tibetan text by the intended *ma-'gag bcud*. The text, as it stands in its printed form, does not reflect the hermeneutical approach nor the rules of Tibetan poetics. So also line three from the bottom of the text seems to be an abbreviation of the longer *'pho-'gyur-med-par spungs* for metrical reasons. The theme of the gathering of the whole's quintessential features in their primordial unity (*bcud-spungs*) has been taken up by Padmasambhava once again in his *sNying-po bcud-spungs nam-mkha' klong-yangs*, 2: 341b–342a.

<sup>51</sup> Technically these three resonance domains are known as *de-bzhin-gshesgs-pa'i rigs* "principle of the whole's and/or the individual's evolutionary thrust" that is both our "body" (*lus*) and our "spirituality" (*thugs*); *rdo-rje'i rigs* "the principle of stability"

shot of Padmasambhava's intricate discussion of *gsang-sngags* is that, from a practical point of view, it protects the experimenter from becoming fragmented and losing his or her integrity and uniqueness of being human with which, in his alienation, in his state of having strayed away, he has to come to grips again.<sup>52</sup> This process begins when the mystery-spell (*gsang-sngags*) turns into a language of symbols (*brda'*). Its underlying dynamics is referred to as *man-ngag* and, as is to be expected, is wholeness itself in its act of unconcealment, a "revelatory phase" or a "telling experience." By using the expressions "revelatory phase" or "telling experience" I attempt to render the ontological-existential significance of the Tibetan technical term without ignoring its epistemological connotation of implying an advice by word of mouth. This dual significance of being a telling experience and an advice is borne out by Padmasambhava himself who states:<sup>53</sup>

The substance of the telling experience in (our) existential reality is  
To draw out the hidden and concealed meaning (of our existential reality).

Residing in the "Teacher," the adamantine spirituality (of the whole),  
It speaks brilliantly through His face.

The etymology is as follows:

Telling experience means to make few words, but to convey a profound meaning.

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likened to a diamond; and *padma'i rigs* "the principle of flexibility and pliability." For details see Herbert Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, s.v.

<sup>52</sup> There are two levels involved. The one is, for want of a better term, "cosmic" and involves three corporeally envisioned and felt patterns of Being/being: *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku*. The other is, also for want of a better term, "individual" and involves the three "programs" of one's corporeal schema (*sku*), of one's communicating with others (*gsung*), and of one's concern with others as one's spirituality (*thugs*). There is both a correspondence between and intertwining of these two levels. Each of the three terms on the two levels are *ontological* concepts that designate our most primordial dimensionalities in the field of Being.

<sup>53</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 69a:

*don-gyi man-ngag ngo-bo ni*  
*khong-nas gab-sbas don 'byin-pa*  
*ston-pa rdo-rje'i thugs-la gnas*  
*gsal-bar zhal-du brjod-pa'o*  
*nges-tshig:*  
*tshig-chung don-che man-ngag-go*  
*nges-don gdams-ngag gang yin-pa*  
*brjod-bral gsang-phyir man-ngag-go*  
*nges-tshig gtan-tshigs bcas-pa-yis*  
*ma-yis gdams-pa bu-la smras-pa bzhin*

Whatever is a guidance concerning what ultimately matters is,  
Because of its being a mystery without any verbiage, a telling experience.

It is like a mother talking to her child  
By way of reasoned certitude.

It need hardly be emphasized that this “telling experience” is our experience with vision and light. In the language of poetic imagination, this light radiates in the face of the “Teacher” to whom as a guiding image we look up in rapture and awe and who, in his being goodness *par excellence*, looks at us with loving eyes.

There exists an intimate relationship between the “mystery-spell” (*gsang-sngags*), the “symbol” (*brda*’), and the “revelatory event” or “telling experience” (*man-ngag*), as may be gleaned from the following account. At the request of the “Little Man who is (the whole’s) self-manifesting light” (*rang-snang khye’u-chung*) to explicate the mystery-spell by way of symbols, the Teacher “Utterly free from the limitations set up by the categories of rational thought” (*mu-mtha’ yongs-grol*) begins with a glossolalia which he then details by three telling experiences that are not so much granular occurrences, but are best understood as phases in a process:<sup>54</sup>

*a-bhyo-ya-tri-tri-a-a-a*

On top of a mountain consisting of nine strata there had grown the tree *rtse-mo byung-rgyal* (“Murmuring Treetop”).<sup>55</sup> On this tree a

<sup>54</sup> *Nyi-zla’i snying-po*, 3: 44a:

*a-bhyo-ya-tri-tri-a-a-a*

*ri-bo dgu-brtsegs-kyi steng-du shing rtse-mo byung-rgyal skyes te/ shing-la rin-po-che gser-gyi ne-tso gcig chags-nas skad sna-tshogs sgrogs-pa’i man-ngag-go*

*gnam rim-pa bcu-gsum-gyi kha-na rin-po-che vaidūrya’i nyi-zla shar-bas snang-srid thams-cad gsal-ba’i* [44b] *’od-kyis khebs te/ mun-pa’i smag-rum thams-cad skad-cig-la sangs-pa’i man-ngag-go*

*nam-mkha’i dbyings-nas bdud-rtsi bcud-gsum thigs-nas skal-ba dang-ldan-pa-nams-kyis zos-pas/dug-lnga nyon-mongs-kyi nad phyin te/ skye-shi’i risa-ba chod-dol/ ’gro-drug g.yang-sa bcad/ khams-gsum ’khor-ba med-de sems-can thams-cad ye-sangs-rgyas-pa’i man-ngag*

<sup>55</sup> This image is an allusion to the nine “spiritual pursuits” or dogmatic teachings of Buddhism, each dogmatism forming a stratum in what is imaged as a mountain. On top of these rocky strata there grows a tree that, being alive, “speaks” in many tongues. This wonderful tree is the non-dogmatic *spyi-ti* experience. This image calls to mind Mephisto’s words to the student in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust I*, “Study,” vs. 2038–2039:

Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,  
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum  
(Dear friend, all theory is grey,

golden parrot had settled.<sup>56</sup> This is the telling experience of speaking in tongues.

From the uppermost plane of the thirteen-tiered celestial realm,<sup>57</sup> sun and moon (consisting of) the precious cat's-eye stone, had risen and covered the whole phenomenal and interpreted world with their brilliant light. This is the telling experience of deepest darkness disappearing in a moment.

When from the expanse of the sky three drops of the elixir of immortality<sup>58</sup> had fallen and when these had been tasted by those who were so fortunate (as to drink them), the disease that is the five poisons, the affective pollutants (in them), had been eradicated and the roots of birth and death had been extirpated. The abyss of the six kinds of existence (into which the living beings are prone to fall) had been

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But green is life's golden tree).

<sup>56</sup> Psychologically speaking, the parrot is a symbol of the Self that, unlike the ego, speaks the "language of Being."

<sup>57</sup> On this image see above Chapter One, n. 5.

<sup>58</sup> According to *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 39b–40a, the three drops of the elixir of immortality are "quintessential extracts" (*bcud*) of Being's (the whole's) dynamics from an ontological-experiential perspective. Their "names" are *skye-med*, *chos-nyid*, and *chos-can*, respectively. Of these *chos-nyid* and *chos-can* are related to each other like *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, probably first used in the Latin translation of the commentary by Averroes (born 1126 at Cordova in Spain) on Aristotle's *De caelo*, and then, since the middle of the thirteenth century onwards into the modern period, frequently used in the Western world since the 13th century, notably by Meister Eckhart (1260–1327), Benedict de Spinoza (1632–1677), and, lastly, by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854), a major figure in the romantic movement that attempted to stem the tide of a growing materialism (that eventually carried the day), The *natura naturans* is the human spirit's creative act of cognition. None of the Western thinkers measures up to Padmasambhava's process thinking with its triadic process structure. Padmasambhava's relevant passage runs as follows:

*chos-nyid rgya-mtsho'i klong-nas bdud-rtsi'i bcud thigs-pas/* [40a] *nyid-las nyid shar de-nyid nang-du grol*  
*skye-med rgya-mtsho'i klong-nas bdud-rtsi'i bcud thigs-pas/ rang-byung 'od-gsal chen-po'i dbyings-su grol*  
*chos-can snang-srid klong-nas bdud-rtsi'i bcud thigs-pas/ rang-snang ma-spangs ma-bsgrubs rtsis-gdab-med-par grol*

When the elixir of immortality [that is Being's giving birth to thoughts/meanings] drops from the vortex of the ocean of Being's giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*), it does so by having risen as (an extract of itself) from it and dissolves (again) in its (very) dimensionality;

When the elixir of immortality drops from the vortex of the ocean of Being's no-birth (*skye-med*), it does so (by way of) self-origination and dissolves (again) in the field-like dimension of Being's utter brilliance;

When the elixir of immortality drops from the vortex of the constructs (*chos-can*) that constitute the phenomenal world and its interpretations, it does so (by way of) self-manifestation and dissolves (again in the dimension) where there is no rejection (of anything), no realization of something), and no pre-meditation.

closed. This is the telling experience of there being no longer a running around in the three realms of worldliness and of all sentient beings passing into the primal dissipation and unfolding (*ye sangs-rgyas*) in (Being's) primordiality.

The phrase "primal dissipation and unfolding in Being's primordiality" not only refers to Padmasambhava's *spyi-ti* experience,<sup>59</sup> but also subtly marks the transition from the "ek-static" and utterly transcendent to a "closure" that is none other than the experiencer who "encounters" (*ngo-sprod*) this transcendence within himself. But this encounter is by no means a discursive venture. Rather, it is a self-reflexive process in its visual and felt immediacy.<sup>60</sup> In its presentation (not re-presentation) symbolic language plays a significant role. In the course of the whole's closure onto itself, the locale is this very closure as a "temple" (*lha-khang*) bathed in and suffused with a supernal light. Here again, three telling experiences characterize this encounter of the experiencer with himself as a process of darkness dissipating and light unfolding. The following is the symbol language outlining this self-reflexive process:<sup>61</sup>

(The first) telling experience is the bursting forth of five (rays of) light from a luminous mansion<sup>62</sup> that is the radiance of the expanse of the sky and the evanescence (of these rays) into nothingness.

Further, when in (some) pitch-black darkness the sun rises, the darkness has become the light (of the whole's) symbolic pregnance.

<sup>59</sup> He expressly states so in his *Nyi-zla'bar-ba*, 2: 343b.

<sup>60</sup> This is also the explication given by Padmasambhava in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 37a:

*ngo-bo ni rang-sems rang-gi ngo-bo/ nges-tshig ni rang-ngo rang-la bstan-te sprad-pas 'phrod-pa'o*

Its substance is the eigen-substance of Being's (spirituality) as our "mind." Its etymology is an understanding (of it) through encountering it by (virtue of (Being) showing its "face" to itself (that is ourselves).

<sup>61</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 36b:

*mkha'-dbyings gsal-ba'i 'od-khang-nas  
'od-linga zang-thal-du shar-ba'i man-ngag-go  
yang mun-pa'i smag-rum 'thibs-pa'i nang-du gsal-ba'i nyi-ma shar-bas  
mun-pa ka-nas dag ste/ snang-srid thams-cad gsal-ba'i 'od-kyis khengs-pa'i man-  
ngag-go  
yang snang-ba'i 'od-kyi lha-khang dang/ mun-pa'i 'khor-khang chen-mo gnyis yod  
ste/ mun-pa'i sgo bcaad-nas ye-shes-kyi 'char-sgo phye-bas/ snang-srid 'khor-'das  
thams-cad sangs-rgyas-su gzigs-shing mthong-ba'i man-ngag-go*

<sup>62</sup> The text reads *'od-khang*, obviously because the "temple" (*lha-khang*) is a further "closure" within what at first is experienced as a "palatial mansion" (*gzhal-yas-khang*), as detailed in Chapter Two.

This is the telling experience of the whole of the phenomenal and interpreted world having been filled with a brilliant light.

Further, there (come into) existence a temple of radiant light, light itself, and a huge house of darkness, samsara. When the door (into) darkness has been slammed shut and the door (into the light) of ordinary awareness modes has been opened, this is the telling experience of gazing at and seeing all the sentient beings who present the phenomenal and interpreted world in terms of samsara and nirvana as passing into the dissipation (of darkness, *sangs*) that is the unfolding (of the light that they are and have always been, *rgyas*).<sup>63</sup>

This section can be concluded with an intriguing summary of the process character of the mystery-spell as it presents itself through symbols that in their coherence form an allegory and intimate the experiencer's quest for his/her existential reality. As is to be expected, this ek-static account begins with a glossolalia before going into the details of the various stages and phases in this process which, for ease of understanding, I have broken down into smaller segments. The account begins as follows:<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Here the play of words between *sems-can* "sentient being" and *sangs-rgyas* "the unfolding (and growing into) the light" deserves special notice. Literally rendered the term *sems-can* means "being of the nature of mind," "being caught in ego-logical opinions." With the disappearance of these darkening features (*sangs*) the primal light can expand and shine brilliantly (*rgyas*). But this does not mean that this experience as an *Erleben* is of a "thing"-character as is that of the *sems-can*. Hence the customary rendering of this contrast by a "sentient being" and a "Buddha" is extremely misleading.

<sup>64</sup> *Nyi-zla'bar-ba*, 2: 348b:

*a ka da ti sa ti sa hri ti bho ya hri tā/ thu la ya a a*  
*gsang-sngags ngo-bo brda'-yis bshad*  
*sngon-thog skye-med gtan-gzhi gnas*  
*rgyal-yul chos-nyid yangs-pa-na*  
*khri-rje yang-gsal spyi-phud bzhugs*  
*blon-'khor bsam-mi-khyab-kyis bskor*  
*rgyal-srid yongs-la mnga' yang mdzad*  
*'dod-pa'i longspyod bsam-mi-khyab*  
*rin-chen kun-'byung lha-khang-na*  
*rang-byung ngang-dangs ye-gsal bzhugs*  
*gsal-dag spros-gcod 'khor-gyis bskor*  
*zhing-khams yongs-la mnga' yang mdzad*  
*chos-nyid longspyod zad-mi-srid*  
*sngang-med mun-pa'i smag-rum-na*  
*rgan-mo rmongs-pa gsal-med gnas*  
*mun-pa'i tho-yor 'khor-gyis bskor*  
*dmus-long shes-med mnga' yang mdzad*  
*sngang-gsum chu-bzhi'i 'khor-bar 'khyams*  
*brgyad-khri bzhi-stong 'khor longspyod*

*a ka da ti sa ti sa hri ti bho ya hri tā/ thu la ya a a*

I shall explain the substance of the mystery-spell (*gsang-sngags*) by way of symbolic language (*brda'*):

In the pre-beginning, in (Being's) eternal beingness, (its) no-birth,

In a kingdom (that was the) vast dimension of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings,<sup>65</sup>

There resided the myriarch "brighter-than-bright (and) crown-jewel of the universe,"

Surrounded by a retinue of ministers, in numbers surpassing the imagination.

He also ruled over all the kingdoms (that were adjacent to his own kingdom) and

The sensuous pleasures he enjoyed exceeded the imagination.<sup>66</sup>

In a precious temple, (our) experienceable world,

There resided the (experienter's) self-originated disposition to become alight (as a) primordial brilliance.

Surrounded by a retinue of brilliances and purities that had done away with all conceptual-propositional impediments

(This disposition) also ruled over all the imaginal realms (that lay in its orbit), and

Its enjoyment of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings could not be diminished (in any manner).

In pitchblack darkness with no light whatsoever present

There lived an old woman who was quite confused and without any luster.

Surrounded by a retinue of dark cairns

She also ruled over (those who) were blind and had no cognitive capacities.

(Aimlessly) she moved about in the circle of the three planes of the phenomenal world with its four rivers<sup>67</sup> and

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*kun-'byung spyi-sa'i ldum-ra-na*  
*bsam-'phel nor-bu rin-chen yod*  
*ci 'dod longs-spyod de-las 'byung*  
*nor de thob-na ci bsam 'grub*

<sup>65</sup> The expression "vast dimension" is an allusion to the kingdom of Vaiśāli, the birth-place of Buddhism.

<sup>66</sup> The three expressions "vast dimension" (*yangs-pa*), applying to both the kingdom of Vaiśāli on a minor scale and the giving birth to thoughts/meaning on the larger scale of Being, the "myriarch" (*khri-rje*), and "the sensuous pleasures" (*'dod-pa'i longs-spyod*) make it abundantly clear that this plane presents the lowest order of the cosmos. We may even go so far as to say that the myriarch, in spite of being brighter-than-bright and the crown-jewel of the universe, is the experienter's "lower self."

<sup>67</sup> The "three planes of the phenomenal world" are the plane of sensuous and sensual desires, the plane of aesthetic forms, and the plane of no-form. The "four rivers" are birth, aging, sickness, and death.

She enjoyed the company of the eighty-four thousand (emotional pollutants).

In a garden<sup>68</sup> of (what is the) common plateau of our experienceable world

There exists a precious wish-granting Jewel.

From it derives the enjoyment of whatever one desires.

If you get this Jewel, whatever you intend will come to pass.

Up to this point a certain similarity with the account relating the quest of the "Little Man of luminous disposition" (*khye'u-chung ngang-dangs*) for his existential value is unmistakable.<sup>69</sup> The difference lies in the "preamble." Here the starting point of the journey is the world of desires and moves up to the no man's land between light and darkness, there the starting point was the imaginal world and moved downward into the no man's land between light and darkness. In what follows here the account becomes highly dramatic.<sup>70</sup> Padmasambhava continues:<sup>71</sup>

If you whose self-originated originary awareness is disposed to become alight

Want to obtain this Jewel

<sup>68</sup> Here the term "garden" (*ldum-ra*) is used. In a similar passage, quoted above in Chapter Two, p. 106 n. 93, the term "valley" (*lung-pa*) is used.

<sup>69</sup> See above Chapter Two, pp. 105ff.

<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately, as is so often the case, the tradition is far from satisfactory. The sDe-dge edition is incomplete and breaks off in the middle of a verse line and where this line continues it does not make any sense. Luckily this missing part is found in the Thimpu edition, vol. 6, 318. Finally, where the two editions begin to tally again it seems that the scribe's gloss or part-remembrance of a passage from another text has crept into the body of the present text. Anyhow, on the basis of all the evidence it is possible to arrive at an intelligible version.

<sup>71</sup> *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 348b:

*nor de thob-par 'dod-pa-la*  
*rang-byung ye-shes ngang-dangs-kyis*  
*khyung-la zhon-nas ral-gri thogs*  
*sra-ba'i go-cha lus-la gon*  
*mi-'jigs-pa-yi [skyel-ma 'tshol*  
*mi-zad-pa-yi rgyag-phe khyer*  
*seng-ge'i rgyal-po rol-tu khrid*  
*stag-mo mi-zan 'phral-du chug*  
*'phrang-gsum chu-bzhi phar rgol-la*  
*mun-snang gnyis-kyi so-mtshams-na*  
*nyi-zla thogs-la smag-rum sol*  
*khri-rje spyi-phud yul-nas phyung*  
*rgan-mo rmongs-ma'i] mig pnye-la*

The passage in brackets is missing in the sDe-dge edition and has been taken from the Thimpu edition.

You must mount an eagle,<sup>72</sup> hold a sword (in your hand),  
 Cover your body with a solid armor,  
 Look for a fearless escort, and  
 Carry along an inexhaustible supply of provisions.<sup>73</sup>  
 Lead the lion-king into a lock-up (and)  
 Allow yourself to become separated from the man-eating tigress.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *khyung*, but obviously the *khyung-chen* is meant. As a rule, the *khyung-chen*, a mythical bird, never serves as a mount and, for this reason, is quite different from the Indian *garuḍa*.

<sup>73</sup> A similar passage is found in Padmasambhava's *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 251b:

*chos-nyid rta-la zhon-nas 'gro*  
*sbyin-pa'i brgyags-phye btags-nas 'gro*  
*ngar-'dzin zas-su za-zhing 'gro*  
*sra-ba'i go-cha gon-nas gon*  
*rno-ba'i mishon-cha thogs-nas 'gro*  
*mi-'jigs thub-nges skyel-ma tshol*

Go by riding on the horse of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings;  
 Go by carrying with you a supply of generosity;  
 Go by eating your belief in an ego as your food;  
 Go by donning a firm armor;  
 Go by holding in your hand a sharp sword;  
 Look for a fearless, effective escort.

<sup>74</sup> In this context the "lion-king" and the "tigress" are primarily symbols for the psyche's male-female complementarity in which the "king" intimates the principle of stability (that, if it becomes a rigid closure to processes of change, stands in the way of the searcher's quest and hence has to be removed and prevented from doing further harm to the life of the searcher by being led into a lock-up) and in which the "tigress" intimates the principle of change (that, if left to itself, becomes just as dangerous—"man-eating" in Padmasambhava's picturesque language—and hence necessitates the searcher's distancing himself from it). While thus the "lion" and the "tigress" are powerful images for the overall principle of complementarity, there is still another dimension to them. They are images for perceptual patterns within the human psyche that not only is "feminine" in nature for Padmasambhava, but also divides, to use a Western analogy coming closest to this Buddhist conception, into *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. (See above n. 58.) This feminine character of the psyche is referred to by the term *ma-mo* of which Padmasambhava gives several lengthy hermeneutical interpretations in several works translated and edited in co-operation with Vairocana. Suffice it to say that the *ma-mo* is a *single*-formed image that proliferates into countless forms, which nonetheless remain with the primordial triune process structure that is the human psyche. As complex perceptual patterns these feminine forces are on the "subjective" side the eight perceptual patterns as developed by the mentalistic Yogācāra system, the first two known by their Sanskrit names of *Gaurī* (the "White One") and *Caurī* (the "Thievish One"), and on the "objective" side—every perceptual pattern is intentional in character—these two are referred to as "she who is lion-faced" (*seng-gdong*) and "she who is tiger-faced" (*stag-gdong*). Within this mentalistic system the "lion-faced one" symbolizes the objectified aspect of the individual's ontic foundation (*kun-gzhi*), the "tiger-faced one" symbolizes the objectified aspect of the individual's ego-logical mind (*gid*). From all that has been said it should be clear that this animal imagery cannot be equated with what we would call the instinctual-affective.

When you have overcome (the dangers posed by) the three cul-de-sacs<sup>75</sup> and the four rivers<sup>76</sup> and come

To the no man's land between darkness and brightness,

Dispel the pitchblack darkness with (the light of) sun and moon (and)

Drive the myriarch "crown-jewel of the universe" from his realm.

Once you have opened the eyes of the old woman who is quite confused ...<sup>77</sup>

Obtain (from her) the wish-granting Jewel.

Catch it in the net that is (the whole's) auto-dissipation (in view of the fact) that (all) conceptual-propositional proliferations (about it) have been cut off.<sup>78</sup>

The present allegory, reminiscent of the one in which the "Little Man of Light" (*khye u-chung*) was sent by his parents to acquire the

<sup>75</sup> These are the same as the "three planes of the phenomenal world" (*snang-gsum*), mentioned in n. 67, with the added menace that once you are caught in any one of them there is little chance of ever getting out again.

<sup>76</sup> See above n. 67.

<sup>77</sup> Here the allegory is interrupted by what is obviously a gloss in which, to make matters worse, both the beginning and end do not make any sense. This "gloss" reads

*mi-yi* [the Thimpu edition has *mi yo*] *nor-bu rin-chen-la*  
*rang-byung rig-yid dran-sems blo*  
*thol-byung ngang-dangs rin-du bcol* [the Thimpu edition has 'jol]

It is "modeled" after a passage in the same work (2: 348a), which reads

*kun-gzhi klong-yangs chos-dbyings-nas*  
*rig-yid sems-blo ci byung yang*  
*thol-byung ngang-dangs byung-sar thim*  
*dper-na rgya-mtshor rdo bskyr bzhin*  
*skye-ba med-pa'i klong-du thim*

Whatever arises (in the manner of one's) excitation and ego-logical mind, (one's) overall psychic disposition and intellect,

From out of (one's) ontic foundation, an expanding vortex (and) field-like dimension in which meanings are born,

Subsides the moment it arises in its source, the(whole's) disposition to become alight,

Like a stone cast into a lake:

It (all) subsides in the vortex that is (the whole's) no-birth.

After this gloss the allegory continues:

*bsam-'phel nor-bu thob-par gyis*  
*spros-gcod rang-grol rgya-yis thob*

<sup>78</sup> The same text (2: 348a) speaks of this "net" as (Being's, the whole's) invariance:

*'gyur-ba med-pa'i rgya-yis thob*

Catch it in the net of (the whole's) invariance.

precious Jewel of his real being and, once he had obtained it, to return to his real home,<sup>79</sup> concludes with the admonition:<sup>80</sup>

Drink the life-sustaining nourishment of the elixir of immortality (that is) the quintessence of (Being's) energy;  
 Preserve this life-sustaining nourishment that you have drunk in (what is) your *Geistigkeit*<sup>81</sup> (that is) the quintessence of (Being's) energy.  
 Lie down in the dimension of ultimate bliss that is not (something that can be) construed  
 In the center of the vortex (of Being) that is unborn, unceasing, and invariant and  
 Go to sleep in the (dimension that) is not marred by internal and external agitations, by a stepping out of itself (into something other than itself) and a transforming (itself into something other than what it is).

Probably the most intriguing statement in this allegory is the expulsion of the myriarch, which reminds us of the *Endzeit* in Gnostic writings<sup>82</sup> and which once again shows that Padmasambhava was well acquainted with Gnostic ideas which he utilized by re-interpreting them.<sup>83</sup>

*C. Encountering (ngo-sprod) our existential reality  
 or the mystery-that-we-are*

The moral imperative (*bla-ma*), "imaged" in the form of a *gestalt* that appeals to the experiencer's visual and visionary capacity as well as audibly "heard" by the experiencer as a binding enunciation (*gdams-ngag*), together with the mystery spell (*gsang-sngags*),

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter Two, pp. 106ff.

<sup>80</sup> 2: 349a:

*yang-snying bdud-rtsi'i bcud-cig 'thung*  
*bcud 'thung yang-snying thugs-la chongs*  
*skye-'gag-'gyur-med klong-dkyil-du*  
*byar-med bde-chen dbyings-su nyol*  
*g.yo-rtsol 'pho-'gyur med-par mnal*

<sup>81</sup> Neither the word "spirituality" nor the word "Mind" (with capital letter) does justice to the Tibetan *thugs*. For this reason I have used the German word *Geistigkeit* that comes closest in meaning to the Tibetan term.

<sup>82</sup> See, for instance, Kurt Rudolph, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, p. 201, and Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 132.

<sup>83</sup> Additional evidence is offered by the description of what awaits the searcher on his return. For Gnostic parallels see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 141 and notes 62 and 63 in particular.

“heard” as the Voice of Being with its revelatory (opening-up) re-soundingness (*man-ngag*) and visibly “perceived” in the form of symbols appealing to any and every sensory capacity, address themselves primarily to the listener who by virtue of his being part of the whole is already attuned to the whole. In a certain sense, the moral imperative and the mystery spell act as “cosmic prelude” for the encounter with our existential reality (*don*) that is not a thing in any sense of the word, but the whole’s dynamics summed up for brevity’s sake in the “code” term *chos-sku* that with its tacitly implied ramifications underlies and informs our humanity.<sup>84</sup>

The idea of an “encounter,” a “coming face to face with” (*ngo-sprod*), occupies a pivotal position in Padmasambhava’s thinking deriving from and staying with the immediacy of an experience (*Erleben*). We have already noted his terse definition or etymology (*nges-tshig*) of what he understands by “encounter.”<sup>85</sup> Elsewhere, however, he is more explicit:<sup>86</sup>

In this my *spyi-ti* experience (as) the peak experience (towering over)  
the nine spiritual pursuits  
(Any individual’s) intellectual horizon with its thematic limitations set  
by his propositional-conceptual-representational mode of thinking  
(*spros-pa*) is going to be overcome (*gcad*) in and by its own peculiar  
possibility-to-function,<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Another term for this existential reality is *chos-nyid*, the “giving birth to thoughts/meanings” (almost in the sense of Schelling’s *natura naturans*)—after all, in the strict sense of the word we *are* meanings that are our understanding (*rtogs*)—always in conjunction with (the whole’s) depth and vastness (*gtung-yangs chos-nyid*) and (the whole’s) brilliant light (*'od-gsal chos-nyid*), and the symbolic pregnance of this brilliance (*'od-gsal ka-dag*). See *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 20b and 28b.

<sup>85</sup> See above p. 152 n. 60.

<sup>86</sup> *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 282b:

*nga-yi dgu-rtse spyi-ti 'dir*  
*spros-pa rang-gi thog-tu gcad*  
*rang-ngo rang-gis rang-la sprad*  
*rang-gden rang-grol thog-tu bca'*  
*chos-'das rang-la rang-gis bzla'o*

<sup>87</sup> The technical term *rang-gi thog-tu* is used to emphasize the immediacy of the over-coming—“right on top of its own coming-to-presence.” In his *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 282b, emphatically states:

*gnas-lugs rang-ngo ma-shes-na*  
*skal-par btsal yang rang-tshi-chad*  
*rang-byung rten dang ma-bral-na*  
*phug-pas ri-rdib brten-rje-phung*  
*'du-'bral med-par ma-rtogs-na*  
*gzhan-nas thob-byed nor-ba'i lam*

(Being's) own face (*rang-ngo*) is going to be encountered (*sprad*) by its own (dynamics);

(Being's) auto-assurance/groundedness (*rang-gdeng*)<sup>88</sup> is going to be maintained (*bca'*) in its (process of) self-evanescence. and

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If one does not recognize the Dasein as one's own face,  
 But were to search for it for aeons, one would merely become disheartened.  
 If self-originatedness is not separated from its prop,  
 It is (like a) hermit with his hut becoming destroyed by an avalanche.  
 If one does not understand that (Dasein) can (unlike a totality) neither be summed  
 up (by its parts) nor be taken apart (by separating its parts),  
 But (expects to) find it somewhere else (than in one's self), one is on the wrong  
 track,

and, a few lines further on, he says of the immediacy involved:

*des-na kur-rig khye'u-chung khyod*  
*zang-thal 'dzin-med chos-'das-su*  
*phyogs-'dzin spros thag-chod-par bgyis*  
*gzhi-yi chos-rnams rlung-la bskur*  
*lam-gi chos-rnams phyag-mas thob*  
*'bras-bu'i chos-rnams chu-la phos*  
*grub-mtha' spyi-mes dur-du skyol*

Therefore, you Little Man (of Light) who are all-excitation,  
 Cut off the rope of clinging to preconceptions about (your)  
 Transcendence that is utterly insubstantial and does not admit of any (ego-logical)  
 grasping (or clinging).

Throw all that goes by the name of the starting-point or ground to the wind;  
 Mop up with a broom all that goes by the name of the way; and  
 Let all that goes by the name of the goal be carried away by the river.

Dispatch (them as) the grandfather of (sundry) belief systems to the burial ground.

<sup>88</sup> The rendering of *rang-gdeng* by "auto-assurance/groundedness" rather than by "self-certainty" needs a few words of clarification. The Tibetan term does not mean "to be sure about oneself." Rather, its meaning is akin to what Martin Heidegger has called "the individual's resoluteness," which, in his *The Basic problems of phenomenology*, p. 288, he has explicated to effect that

[it] does not mean clinging obstinately to one's own private wishes but being free for the factual possibilities of current existence.

From a more dynamic perspective *gdeng* means what Erich Jantsch has called "grounding" or "groundedness" (*Design for Evolution*, pp. 29f.), which he elaborates in the following words:

It means to stand with both feet on the earth, to communicate with the energy streaming from it (from the mythological womb, from our Mother), to let oneself be *grasped* by the life force [*Italics mine*].

As is to be expected, Padmasambhava details this "groundedness" by contrasting it with an "engaged" person's not-being-grounded (*gdeng-med*). In his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 52a–53a, he says by way of introduction:

*lta sgom spyod-pa'i gdeng dang-ldan gyur-na*  
*bdud-kyi spyod-yul mi-'byung ste*  
*ji-srid gdeng dang-ma-ldan-na*  
*bdud-kyi spyod-yul bco-brgyad byung*  
*lta-ba gol-zhing gdeng-med-na*

The pass (*la*) of it being its own transcendence is going to be crossed (*zla*) by itself.<sup>89</sup>

*gzung-'dzin nyon-mongs dug lnga 'byung*  
*bsgom-pa gdeng-med gol-gyur-pas*  
*bying dang rgod-pa'i bdud gnyis byung*  
*spyod-pa gdeng-med gol-gyur-pas*  
*spyod-pa dag-la bdud bdun byung*  
*lta sgom spyod-pa'i gdeng-med-pas*  
*nyams-yi bdud ni bzhi 'byung ste*  
*de-ltar gdeng [the blockprint has don] dang-mi-ldan-pas*  
*bdud-kyi spyod-yul 'byung-bar 'gyur*  
*rang-byung ye-she's rang-la yod gyur-kyang*  
*rgyal-bu dmangs-su 'khyams-pa bzhin*

If a person's vision, imaginative cultivation of the vision, and the enactment of this vision (as his life style) is grounded,

(This person) does not become the playground for spiritual death;

But as long as he is not grounded,

He will be the playground for the eighteen kinds of spiritual death.

When vision falters and becomes ungrounded

The subject-object dichotomy with its five poisons of emotional pollution arises.

When the imaginative cultivation of the vision becomes ungrounded and falters

Two kinds of spiritual death, depression and ebullience, arise.

When the enactment of the vision (as a person's life style) becomes ungrounded and falters

Seven kinds of spiritual death affect the enactment.

When vision, imaginative cultivation of the vision, and the enactment of the vision (as the person's life style) become ungrounded

The four kinds of spiritual death affecting his dignity arise;

Thus, when (a person) is ungrounded

He becomes the playground for (all kinds of) spiritual death.

Even if there is (Being's) self-originated originary awareness present in such a person

This person is like a prince walking among commoners.

Lastly, in his *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 297b, Padmasambhava details what it means "to be grasped by being grounded" (*gdeng-gis zin*) and his statement

*chos-nyid ma dang 'phrad-pas gnyis-med gdeng-gis zin*

By meeting (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, (one's) mother, one is grasped by (one's) groundedness in non-duality

strangely anticipates the above quoted words of Erich Jantsch.

<sup>89</sup> The original text of this verse line is almost untranslatable because of the term *la zla-ba*. Though not listed in any dictionary, it is frequently in the older (*rnying-ma*) literature and in works continuing their line of thought, as for instance by Klong-chen-rab-'byams-pa. The current oral explanation is "to be absolutely certain." The literal meaning is "to cross a mountain pass" and refers to an experience (*Erleben*) that defies any realistic reduction. The following remarks may be of help to an understanding. We (each and everyone) are our (*rang*) transcendence (*chos-'das*), figuratively spoken of as a mountain pass (*la*). This pass has to be crossed (*zla*) simply because we cannot stay on there, we have to go on or return. Again, using figurative language, we have to jump the last hurdle (our "transcendence") that prevents us from being the whole (of Being).

In this encounter of Being with itself, our coming face to face with ourselves, a shift in the direction of the visual is perceptible without, however, effecting a break with the audible. Basically this encounter is a pattern cognition, which is to say our concern with *invariance*. But invariance, far from being something absolute, is matched by *uncertainty* and, as Padmasambhava informs us, invariance and uncertainty constitute a *unity*. Let us listen to what he has to say and come to an understanding by decoding what to all appearances is an intricately coded message. He introduces this intricate problem with the following words:<sup>90</sup>

The encounter with invariance is threefold:  
 The encounter with (Being's) abidingness (or *Da-sein*)—invariance,  
 The encounter with the presences of its presencing—uncertainty,  
 The encounter with the unity of these two.

After this terse preamble he takes up each topic in detail and illustrates it by images that are primarily symbolic in character. These are his words concerning the encounter with invariance:<sup>91</sup>

The encounter with invariance, (Being's) abidingness (or *Da-sein*) means that  
 Invariance is not brought about by causes (lying outside it) nor that it is annulled by (extraneous) conditions.  
 [Nonetheless it reflects a series of symmetry transformations such that its]  
 Substance (*ngo-bo*), invariance, [transforms itself into its] own most unique ability-to-be (*rang-bzhin*) that does not exist [apart from its substance in the manner of a] duality, [which, in turn, transforms itself into one's]

<sup>90</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b:

*mi-'gyur ngo-sprod nam-gsum-la*  
*gnas-lugs mi-'gyur ngo-sprod dang*  
*snang-tshul ma-nges ngo-sprod dang*  
*de gnyis gnyis-med ngo-sprod-do*

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*:

*gnas-lugs mi-'gyur ngo-sprod bstan-pa-la*  
*rgyu-yis ma-bskyed rkyen-gyis mi-'jig-pa*  
*ngo-bo mi-'gyur rang-bzhin gnyis-su med*  
*de-yi don yang 'di-lta ste*  
*rin-chen 'od-'bar gzhal-yas-na*  
*gzugs-med kun-khyab sku gcig bzhugs*  
*ming ni skye-med brjod-bral dmigs-med kun-gsal grags*  
*de dang ngo-sprod bstan-pa ni*  
*bla-ma'i zhal-las shes-par bya*

Existential reality (*don*) that is as follows:

In a palatial mansion that is a precious blazing light

There resides a gestalt (*sku*) that has neither color nor shape (*gzugs*),  
but nonetheless is omnipresent.

Its name is said to be (Being's) No-birth (*skye-med*), ineffable, non-referential, all-radiant.

The impact of this encounter

Will be known (in a very profound way by the experiencer) from the gaze [*Gesicht*] of the (personalistically envisioned) moral imperative (*bla-ma*).<sup>92</sup>

Paradoxically, Dasein's invariance, the immovable all and not-yet-unfolded, is already and always an unfolding; but this unfolding is unpredictable as to what will be its presence except for the fact that the unfolded assumes a more distinct quality. Padmasambhava describes this unfolding and presencing of wholeness in the following words:<sup>93</sup>

The encounter with the presences of (*Da-sein's*) presencing—uncertainty—means that

In this very presencing of wholeness

There resides a gestalt (*sku*) that is inseparable from its locality  
in(which it finds itself)

Within the *mandala* of the dimensionality of (the whole's) realm of meanings.

Its name is Non-duality-ablaze-in-its-*Befindlichkeit* (*rang-gnas*).<sup>94</sup>

The impact of this encounter

Will be known (in a very profound way by the experiencer) from the gaze [*Gesicht*] of the (personalistically envisioned) moral imperative.

What Padmasambhava here wants to say is that in the whole's symmetry transformation (from invariance to uncertainty) the whole "creates" its own primordial *Befindlichkeit* or sense-of-being-en-

<sup>92</sup> On a minor scale this "encounter" seems to have been captured by Rembrandt in his etching "Faust in his Study."

<sup>93</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b:

*snang-tshul ma-nges ngo-sprod ni*  
*cer-gyi snang-ba de-nyid-du*  
*chos-dbyings dkyil-'khor nang de-nas*  
*sor-bzhag dbyer-med sku gcig bzhugs*  
*ming ni gnyis-med rang-gnas 'bar*  
*de dang ngo-sprod bstan-pa ni*  
*bla-ma'i zhal-nas shes-par bya*

<sup>94</sup> This term is synonymous with *rang-rgyud* "the weft and warp of one's existence."

worlded as the pre-condition of its own pre-conceptual and as yet pre-ontological self-understanding.

Although for descriptive purposes we may speak of invariance *and* uncertainty, they are not a duality, as Padmasambhava tells us and elaborates in the following words:<sup>95</sup>

Now I shall discuss the encounter with the non-duality (of invariance and uncertainty):

In a precious mansion of (a sheer) light that neither expands nor contracts

There resides a gestalt (*sku*) inseparable from (this non-duality's) disposition to become alight.

Its name is Fore-structure of our humanity (*chos-sku*), divorced from any conceptual-propositional expatiations.

The impact of this encounter

Will be known (in a very profound way by the experiencer) from the gaze [*Gesicht*] of the (personalistically envisioned) moral imperative.

The upshot of this lengthy discussion of what is meant by "encountering" one's existential reality, summed up in the idea of a fore-structure of one's humanity, is that this fore-structure is not some absolute. It does not stand above and outside of the evolutionary process, but is in the unfolding and self-realization of the whole as Man/human, and, as Padmasambhava insists, a human being is nothing without the moral principle, "speaking," "teaching," and experientially accessible in the "formless" gestalt of the *bla-ma*.

But what is the relationship between the moral imperative (*bla-ma*) and the fore-structure of our humanity (*chos-sku*)? The answer seems to be that the moral imperative is the principle of humanity as pervasive of the whole as is the fore-structure of our humanity in our bodily existence.

In speaking of a fore-structure of our humanity we must bear in mind that it is not something monolithic and that the term itself is only a shorthand expression for a complexity that has, traditionally, been referred to as "three fore-or proto-structures" (*sku gsum*) that

<sup>95</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b.:

*gnyis-med ngo-sprod bstan-par bya*  
*'phro-'du med-pa'i rin-chen 'od-khang-na*  
*ngang-dangs dbyer-med sku gcig bzhugs*  
*ming ni spros-bral chos-skur grags*  
*de dang ngo-sprod bstan-pa ni*  
*bla-ma'i zhal-nas shes-par bya*

are best understood as energy patterns within energy patterns as the forms into which the whole's energy constitutes itself. This energy is the whole's supraconscious ecstatic intensity that must be experienced in its immediacy in order to be known, and it does so by and through itself (*rang-rig*). About this complexity, rooted in the whole's sheer intensity, Padmasambhava, has this to say:<sup>96</sup>

(The whole's and, by impication, our) own (supraconscious) ecstatic intensity (*rang-rig*)<sup>97</sup> is, as the *chos-sku*'s substance, (its) nothingness (*stong*) and

As the giving birth to thoughts/meanings, (its) radiance (*gsal*).

This "nothingness" substance and the "giving birth to thoughts/meanings" radiance

Abide in the purity of their intrinsic radiance.

The functionality of this radiance takes on a dual character:

Its (tremor-like) stirring (*'gyu-ba*, becoming the whole's) "turbulence" (*rlung*) and its lighting-up (*snang-ba*, becoming the whole's) luminosity (*'od*).

It is through the tremor-like stirring that (the whole process) is sensuously experienced.

He then goes on to say:<sup>98</sup>

When in the *chos-sku* that is (the whole's inseparable) radiance-nothingness,

Its radiance (that is its inherent) turbulence is stirred up, the luminosity that originates,

<sup>96</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 29b:

*rang-rig chos-sku'i ngo-bo stong*

*de ni chos-nyid gsal-ba'o* [both the sDe-dge edition and the Thimpu edition (abounding in additional spelling mistakes), read *stong-pa'o* which is gainsaid by the lines that follow].

*ngo-bo stong-pa chos-nyid gsal*

*rang-gsal dag-tu gnas-pa yin*

*gsal-ba'i rtsal ni gnyis-su 'byung*

*'gyu-ba rlung dang snang-ba 'od*

*'gyu-ba'i dbang-gis nyams-su myong-ba 'char*

<sup>97</sup> This paraphrase of the term *rang-rig* attempts to bring out Padmasambhava's insight that we are the whole and only a part of it and that, for this reason, experience as an *Erleben* is always holistic.

<sup>98</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 30b:

*chos-sku gsal-stong de-nyid-la*

*gsal-cha rlung 'gyus dus-na 'od 'byung-ba*

*de-nyid longs-sku kho-na yin-pa'o*

Is the *longs-sku* plain and simple.<sup>99</sup>

He concludes his terse statements with the words:<sup>100</sup>

When the *chos-sku*'s functionality and effulgence have arisen, the *longs-sku* and *sprul-sku* (are present).<sup>101</sup> (Hence), when the *chos-sku* is encountered, both the *longs-sku* and the *sprul-sku* are encountered.

After this brief excursion into the encounter with the three inter-related energy patterns that constitute the experiencer's existential reality and in this encounter are re-cognized as what they are, let us return to Padmasambhava's summary of the three encounters he had introduced by speaking of them in terms of invariance, uncertainty, and non-duality. This summary in which the *chos-sku* occupies a prominent position because it is the *sine qua non* for the other energy patterns,<sup>102</sup> is presented in the form of an argument that ulti-

<sup>99</sup> As will be readily admitted, both *chos-sku* and *longs-sku* (short for *longs-spyod-rdzogs-pa'i sku*) are difficult terms, because both are born from experience and not abstracted from (detached) observation. I have paraphrased (a literal translation being impossible) the *chos-sku* as "the (bodily experienced) fore-structure of our humanity" by combining Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "corporeal schema" for *sku* and David Bohm's "meaning" for *chos*, respectively. Padmasambhava's characterization of the *chos-sku* as "invariant" (*'gyur-ba-med*) in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 29b, tallies with David Bohm's statement that "meaning is to sustain your existence rather than to change it." See Renée Weber, "Meaning as being in the implicate order philosophy of David Bohm: a conversation" in B. J. Hiley and F. David Peat (eds.), *Quantum Implications*, p. 437. While Maurice Merleau-Ponty, speaking of a corporeal schema which he later called the "flesh," emphasizes the *sku*, David Bohm, by speaking of meaning, clearly emphasizes the *chos*. Similarly the term *longs-sku* may be paraphrased as the "(bodily experienced) fore-structure (*sku*) of the experiencer's contextuality-with and total engagement-in a social nexus (*longs-spyod-rdzogs*)."

<sup>100</sup> *ibid*:

*chos-sku'i rtsal-mdangs 'char-nas longs-sku sprul-sku'o*  
*chos-sku'i ngo-sprod dus-na longs-sku sprul-sku gnyis-ka 'phrod*

and on fol. 31a he summarily states:

*chos-sku ngo-sprod dus-na sku gsum ngo-sprod-pa'o/ ci'i phyir zhe-na sku gsum*  
*lhun-grub phyir*

When the *chos-sku* is encountered, the three energy patterns are encountered.

Why? Because the three energy patterns are there.

<sup>101</sup> The term *sprul-sku* may be paraphrased as "the (bodily experienced) fore-structure of the experiencer's reaching-out to others."

<sup>102</sup> This does not mean that the "other energy patterns" (the *longs-sku* and the *sprul-sku*) are granularly isolatable patterns. All of them intertwine and, in view of the experiencer's enworldedness, the *sprul-sku* is of paramount importance. Thus, in his *Nyizla'od-'bar*, 2: 346a, Padmasambhava says about the "primal sublimity with its three energy patterns" (*mchog-gi dang-po sku-gsum 'chang*):

*ye-nas skye-med chos-kyi sku*

mately goes back to Indian logic. But Padmasambhava's presentation reflects his concern with the experiencer's *Befindlichkeit* in a dimension of light, rather than with the rules of formal logic. His words are as follows:<sup>103</sup>

Giving a unitary account of the three encounters (involves a flashback to the source from which they have started)—

(Once the whole's) energy has assumed the character of a luminous *mandala*,

(In it as) a palatial mansion that is the immensity of (the whole's) luminosity

There resides the *chos-sku*, a blazing light, flawless,

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*rtsal-zer 'gag-med longs-spyod-sku*  
*thugs-rje sprul-pa'i sku 'chang-ba*  
*phyogs-bcur sprul-pa sna-tshogs 'gyed*  
*sprul-pa'i sku te sku-yi mchog*

(The primal sublimity that) gathers (within itself)

The *chos-sku* that since time before time has had no origin,

The *longs-sku* whose rays (as its) functionality never cease (to shine), and

The *sprul-sku* that is the reaching out of (its) concerned spirituality,

Manifests various forms of this reaching-out in the ten directions (of the compass).

This is the (real) *sprul-sku*, the sublime gestalt (in which the primal sublimity manifests itself).

The luminous intertwining of the "spiritual" and the "physical-material"—in Padmasambhava's process-oriented thinking there is no sharp separation between contraries—together with the importance of the *sprul-sku* in the experiencer's sensuous world-engagement is clearly brought out in Padmasambhava's *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 35b:

*rig-pa'i cha-nas chos-kyi sku*  
*'od-kyi cha-nas longs-sku'o*  
*sgo-lnga gsal-ba'i cha-nas sna-tshogs 'gyu*  
*de-nyid sprul-pa'i sku-ru bstan*

From the perspective of (the whole's) ecstatic supraconscious intensity—the *chos-sku*,

From the perspective of (the whole's) luminosity—the *longs-sku*, and

From the perspective of (the whole's) five radiating senses—the stirring of a multiplicity (of sensuous presences):

This is shown to be the *sprul-sku*.

<sup>103</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b:

*ngo-sprod rnam gsum dril-bas gcig-tu 'dus*  
*snying-po 'od-kyi dkyil-'khor-can*  
*'od mtha'-med-pa'i gzhal-yas-khang*  
*snying-po dmigs-med brjod-bral kun-gyi dngos*  
*'od-'bar dri-med chos-sku bzhugs*  
*de dang ngo-sprod bstan-pa ni*  
*dpe dang don dang gtan-tshigs gsum*

(The whole's) energy, unobjectifiable, ineffable, the substance of all (that is to be).

The elucidation of (the experiencer's) encounter with it (requires the use of

Similes (to illustrate) the topic (under consideration), and the middle (that holds the similes and the topic together).

On closer inspection, the manner in which Padmasambhava develops this thesis reflects his process-oriented thinking in which the categories of representational-rational thought and of formal logic are viewed in an original fluidity that aims at overcoming the experiencer's encounter with the being-that-he-is as an absolute as postulated by speculative thought. This "jumping the last hurdle that separates the experiencer in his closure from his wholeness" (*la zla*) is already noticeable in the presentation of the "topic" (*don*) that, as the individual's existential reality and/or the fore-structure of his humanity, is not a "thing" whatsoever, but a dimensionality. As Padmasambhava elaborates:<sup>104</sup>

The "topic" (under consideration) is to be understood in the following manner:

All that can be spoken is to be "encountered" (recognized) as the dimensionality of the ineffable;

All that can be demonstrated is to be "encountered" as the dimensionality of the undemonstrable;

All that can be given a name is to be "encountered" as the dimensionality of the no-name;

All passion is to be "encountered" as the dimensionality of the no-desire;

Model building,<sup>105</sup> dualistic views (and attitudes), and (one's) obsession with the analyzable-isolatable are to be

<sup>104</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b:

*don ni 'di-bzhin shes-par bya  
brjod-bya thams-cad brjod-med nang-du sprod  
mtshon-bya thams-cad mtshon-med nang-du sprod  
ming-'dogs thams-cad ming-med ngang-du sprod  
'dod-zhen thams-cad 'dod-med ngang-du sprod  
bya-byed gnyis-'dzin brtags-zhen-rnams  
byar-med 'dzin-med brtags-zhen med-par sprod*

The *rtag-zhen* in the last line of the printed text is an obvious mistake and has been duly corrected in the above transliteration.

<sup>105</sup> I have borrowed the term "model building" from Erich Jantsch, *Design for Evolution*, p. 191, as a rendering of the Tibetan term *bya-byed*. Jantsch's definitions of "model" and "model building" precisely fit the meaning of the Tibetan term.

“Encountered” as (the dimensionality of) the non-construable, the non-subjective, and the non-analyzable (and non-isolatable).

We find the same attitude in Padmasambhava’s assessment of the simile (*dpe*) that for him is less a comparison revealing an unsuspected likeness between two seemingly disparate “things,” than a heuristic device to make a person “think.” These are his words:<sup>106</sup>

“Simile” is to be understood in the following manner:

(When) drops of water encounter the ocean they become inseparable from it;

(When) milk is mixed with water both become inseparable from each other;

(When) salt is mixed with water both become inseparable from each other.

The “middle” (*rtags*) continues the idea of indivisibility and inseparability. Although the term “middle” is taken from the domain of logic, Padmasambhava uses it as an ontological concept that cannot be understood by a reductively calculating rationality (as can all logical concepts). It can only be understood “feelingly,” that is to say, in an experience grounded in wholeness. The presentation of what the term “middle” connotes reflects Padmasambhava’s anthropocosmic process-oriented thinking that seemingly involves two holistic movements, the one “up” and the other “down.” Or, as we might say, wholeness is nowhere else than in its manifestations and its manifestations are always wholeness itself. Padmasambhava’s own words are:<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 253b–254a:

*dpe ni 'di-bzhin shes-par bya*  
*rgya-[254a] mtsho chu-bran ngo-sprod dbyer mi-phyed*  
*'o-ma chur 'dres dbyer mi-phyed*  
*tshva dang chu 'dres dbyer mi-phyed*

<sup>107</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 254a:

*gtan-tshigs 'di-bzhin shes-par bya*  
*mtshan-nyid snying-por thim-pas dbyer mi-phyed*  
*snying-po yan-lag thim-pas dbyer mi-phyed*  
*'od dang zer 'phrad dbyer mi-phyed*  
*chos-sku longs-skur thim-pas dbyer mi-phyed*  
*rig-pa snying-por thim-pas dbyer mi-phyed*  
*ma-la bu thim dbyer mi-phyed*  
*ye-shes rang-sar thim-pas nam-rtog rang-sar grol*  
*snying-po klong-nas shar-bas sku-gsum 'du-'bral med*  
*chu dang me-long shel-sgong gsum-la dpe-yi ngo-sprod bya*  
*chos-sku longs-sku sprul-sku gsum-la don-gyi ngo-sprod bya*

- “Middle” is to be understood in the following manner:
- When (the mind’s) speculative activity becomes absorbed in the energy (that is Being or the whole), there is indivisibility/inseparability;
  - When (the whole’s) energy becomes absorbed in its branchings, there is indivisibility/inseparability;
  - When (the whole’s) luminosity falls in with its rays, there is indivisibility/inseparability;
  - When the *chos-sku* becomes absorbed in the *longs-sku*, there is indivisibility/inseparability;
  - When (the whole’s) excitability/excitation is absorbed in (the whole’s) energy, there is indivisibility/inseparability;
  - When the child returns to its mother, there is indivisibility/inseparability;<sup>108</sup>
  - When the (whole’s) originary awareness modes return to (what is) their “home,”<sup>109</sup> the divisive concepts (that are the errancy modes of the originary awareness modes) dissolve in (what is) their home;
  - Since the three energy patterns (the *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku*) have risen from what is the vortex of (the whole’s) energy they are such that none of them can either be added to or subtracted from the other.
  - Water, a mirror, and a crystal are the similes (to facilitate an understanding of what is meant by) encounter;
  - The *chos-sku*, the *longs-sku*, and the *sprul-sku* are the (interrelated) topics of the encounter;
  - Thinking’s thinking, the giving birth to thoughts/meanings, and the originary awareness modes (as functions) of the (whole’s) excitability/excitation are the middle (for the whole’s process character).

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*sems-nyid chos-nyid rig-pa’i ye-shes gsum-la riags-kyi ngo-sprod bya*

<sup>108</sup> In this and the next line the verb used is *thim* “becoming absorbed in.” The implication is that the child has run away from its mother, but, finding no place to rest, returns to its mother. Similarly, the originary awareness mode as functions of the whole’s supraconscious ecstatic intensity cannot function in separation from this intensity. In so returning to their “origin,” the divisive concepts are “felt to drop off” and to dissolve in the sheer intensity of wholeness.

<sup>109</sup> *rang-sa*. This frequently used image intimates a return to the place or source from which one has strayed. Padmasambhava’s use of this term is akin to the Gnostic *anachoresis*, a return to one’s own origins, in which case his *ngo-sprod* “encounter” and/or “re-cognition” allows itself to be linked to the Gnostic idea of *epignosis*, a remembering of one’s own celestial home. For the Gnostic ideas see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 58. Here a word of caution concerning “remembering” may not be out of place, all the more so because Padmasambhava uses the term *dran-pa*, usually rendered as “memory,” in various combinations. For him *dran-pa* is a holistic function, not an epistemological concept. In his anthropocosmic vision Man/human “remembers” the initial conditions which made his particular development possible, whereby he is able to link backward to his own origin (*rang-sa*) that ultimately guides his self-determination in the direction of *being/becoming* Man/human.

*D. Similes/illustrative instances (dpe)*

Not only is the simile the oldest readily identifiable poetic artifice,<sup>110</sup> it also is a challenge and tool for serious and, by implication, creative thinking. To the question by rDo-rje-sems-dpa' (who is Padmasambhava's own questioning mind) of how "the *spyi-ti* experience is explained and made intelligible to the listener" the teacher Kun-bzang (who is none else than Padmasambhava himself, wholeness personified), gives the following answer:<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Simile (*upamā*) reigns supreme in Indian works on poetics. In his *Kāvyaṅkāra* II 15–50, Daṇḍin (ca. 665–720 C.E.) divides this poetic figure into thirty-two varieties. For details see Dharmendra Kumar Gupta, *A Critical Study of Daṇḍin and His Works*. Daṇḍin's work had great influence on Tibetan poetics. However, it should be noted that the Tibetan term *dpe* renders several Sanskrit terms such as *udāharaṇa* (positive or negative illustrative instance), *upamāna* (analogy), *dṛṣṭānta* (illustrative example), all of which belong to the Nyāya philosophical system, as well as such other terms as *iva*, *vat*, *yathā*, *sadrśa*, and *saṃnibha*, all of which mean "similar." Padmasambhava's most frequently used term is *mtshon-(pa'i) dpe*—a cross between *dṛṣṭānta* and *upamā*. His extensive use of images is meant to facilitate an understanding of a more or less difficult subject, not to draw the listener into an argument about whether the image is a simile of poetic evocativeness or an illustrative example of logical reductionism.

<sup>111</sup> *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 347ab:

*theg-rgyal rdzogs-chen spyi-ti 'di*  
*nam-mkha' stong-pa'i dpes mtshon-nas*  
*mtha'-dbus phyogs-ris med-par bshad*  
*nyi-ma zla-ba'i dpes mtshon-nas*  
*snang-srid thams-cad gsal-bar bshad*  
*bya-rgyal khyung-gi dpes mtshon-nas*  
*theg-dman zil-gyis gnon-te bshad*  
*tshangs-pa'i 'brug-sgra'i dpes mtshon-nas*  
*kun-bsgrags go-[347b] zhing gsal-bar bshad*  
*mtshon-cha'i 'khor-lo'i dpes mtshon-nas*  
*'khrul-s nang spros-pa bcad-de bshad*  
*mun-khung sgron-me'i dpes mtshon-nas*  
*don-gyi gser dang sprad de bshad*  
*nyi-ma'i snying-po'i dpes mtshon-nas*  
*yang-gsang bcud-kyi snying-po bstan*  
*gser-'gyur rtsi-yi dpes mtshon-nas*  
*ma-spangs rang-sar grol-bar bshad*  
*stag-mo'i rngam-stabs dpes mtshon-nas*  
*dkyus-kyi sa-rnams bcad-par bya*  
*rus-sbal nur-'gros dpes mtshon-nas*  
*tshig-gi 'bru-mams zhib-tu gnyer*

I state the *spyi-ti* experience, the king among the spiritual pursuits, an utter completeness, (to be such that)

It has neither a periphery nor center,<sup>112</sup> neither cardinal points nor demarcations (between them)<sup>113</sup>

By using as illustration the simile of the open sky.

I state (this experience to be such that) the whole of the phenomenal world and its interpretation is (Being's) brilliance

By using as illustration the similes of sun and moon.

I state (this experience to be such that) by its splendor it vanquishes the lower spiritual pursuits

By using as illustration the simile of the *khyung*, the king among the birds.<sup>114</sup>

I state (this experience to be such that) it speaks loudly and intelligibly  
By using as illustration the simile of Brahma's voice, the peal of thunder.

I state (this experience to be such that) it cuts off the proliferation by thought and words<sup>115</sup> (tied to) the coming-to-presence of errancy

By using as illustration the simile of revolving weapons.

I state (this experience to be such that) it makes (a person) find the gold of his real being

By using as illustration the simile of a lamp in a dark place.

I state (this experience to be such that) it reveals the quintessence of (what is) the elixir of (life's) supreme mystery

By using as illustration the simile of the energy in the sun.

I state (this experience to be such that) without renouncing (anything),<sup>116</sup> (everything) dissolves (by itself) into its legitimate dwelling (that is, Being as such)

<sup>112</sup> In the Western context this idea is to be found in the famous sentence "*Deus (vel mundus) est sphaera infinita, cuius centrum est ubique et circumferentia nusquam*," which is the subject matter of the special study by Dietrich Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt*.

<sup>113</sup> The psychological meaning of the Tibetan *phyogs-ris med-pa* is that thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*), indicative of the *spyi-ti* experience as noted before, does not know of any partiality or biasedness.

<sup>114</sup> For metrical reasons the short form *khyung*, instead of the larger form *khyung-chen*, is used. In Buddhist thinking this mythical bird is a symbol for the whole's supraconscious ecstatic intensity, thinking's thinking. It never connotes a mount as does the Sanskrit equivalent *garuḍa*.

<sup>115</sup> The term *spros-pa* (in Sanskrit *prapañca*) denotes the intellectual horizon coinciding with mental-verbal proliferations that lead away from the real.

<sup>116</sup> *ma-spangs* is a key-notion in Padmasambhava's thinking. As utter transcendence the *spyi-ti* experience leaps beyond any dualistic modes. In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*,

By using as illustration the simile of the alchemical substance that turns base metal into gold.

2: 212b–213a, he lets the “teacher” Goodness *par excellence* (*kun-tu bzang-po*) respond to the question by rDo-rje-sems-dpa’ by saying:

*nga-yi spyi-ti yoga-la*  
*dgag-bsgrub spang-len byung-na bka’ dang ’gal*  
*dug-gsum spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*sku-lnga bsgrub-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*dug-lnga spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*ma-rig spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*ye-shes bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*mam-rtoḡ spangs-pas nga spangs-so*  
*chos-nyid bsgrubs-pas nga spangs-so*  
*’khor-ba spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*myang-’das bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*sems-can spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*sangs-rgyas bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*bdag-gzhan spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*bdag-med bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*phyogs-med bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*dgra-gnyen spangs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*dgra-gnyen gnyis-med bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*  
*gsal-ba bsgrubs-kyang nga spangs-so*

If with respect to my *spyi-ti* experience

Any such notions as negation and affirmation, rejection and acceptance crop up, they contradict what this experience has to say:

- By renouncing the three poisons I have been renounced;
- By realizing the five existential patterns I have been renounced;
- By renouncing the five poisons I have been renounced;
- By renouncing unknowing I have been renounced;
- By realizing the originary awareness (modes) I have been renounced;
- By renouncing dichotomizing thought I have been renounced;
- By realizing (Being’s) giving birth to thoughts/meanings I have been renounced;
- By renouncing samsara I have been renounced;
- By realizing nirvana I have been renounced;
- By renouncing (the status of being) an (ordinary) sentient being I have been renounced;
- By realizing (the status of being) a spiritually awake person I have been renounced;
- By renouncing oneself and other I have been renounced;
- By realizing the no-self I have been renounced;
- By realizing impartiality I have been renounced;
- By renouncing friend and foe I have been renounced;
- By realizing the non-duality of friend and foe I have been renounced;
- By realizing the light (that one is) I have been renounced.

Padmasambhava continues listing all the practices and observations as renunciations of wholeness, all of them are merely varieties of the dualistic notions of negation and affirmation that hold a person prisoner. “As long as this craving for duality is not cut off, there will be few who cross (the ocean of samsara)” (*gnyis-snang zhen-pa ma-chod-par/pha-rol phyin-pa’i sems-can nyung*, *ibid.* 213a).

I state (this experience to be such that) it eliminates (any) distances  
(between points)

By using as illustration the simile of the vehemence of a tigress's  
(leap).

I state (this experience to be such that) it involves itself deeply in let-  
ters and syllables

By using as illustration the simile of a slowly moving tortoise.

The attentive reader will be struck by the number of similes that imply light and preciousness: the clear sky, the brilliance of sun and moon, the light of a lamp, the gold of one's real being. Above all Padmasambhava's world is a world of light of which its most precious aspect is the human individual in the sense of being a hierarchically structured process of individuation that moves slowly or quickly according to the overall intensity involved. However, Padmasambhava is too astute a thinker to succumb to the fallacy of assuming that similes, because they are explicit comparisons revealing an unexpected, if not to say, unsuspected likeness between two seemingly disparate "things," prove anything. For him, similes are powerful tools to rouse a person's ability to think and to see in an exceptional, that is, experience-suffused (*erlebnismässig*, not merely *erfahrungsmässig*) manner.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, immediately after having shown the importance of similes as an aid to catch a glimpse of the rich world of what he has called the *spyi-ti* experience, he utters this caveat:<sup>118</sup>

<sup>117</sup> In his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 80a, he is quite explicit:

*dgos-pa ni don rtogs-pa'o*

The (simile's) purpose is (to make a person) understand his existential reality.

<sup>118</sup> *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 347b:

*bshad-pa'i chos-rnams tha-snyad yin*  
*ma-bshad go-ba'i chos-gcig dgos*  
*blos btags chos ni rtog-tshogs yin*  
*blo-las-'das-pa'i chos gcig dgos*  
*byas-pa'i chos ni 'dus-byas yin*  
*ma-byas rang-byung chos-gcig dgos*  
*bsgrubs-pa'i chos-rnams rtol-bsgrub yin*  
*rtol-bsgrub med-pa'i chos-gcig dgos*  
*rtol-bsgrub chos ni yid-smon yin*  
*dmigs-med bsam-'das chos-gcig dgos*

Padmasambhava elaborates on this topic in his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 205a and 211ab, where he explicitly states that none of what is listed is in any way conducive to the dissipation of one's unknowing and the unfolding of the light that one is. In his *Nyi-zla bkod-pa*, 1: 105a, he replaces *dgos* "necessity" by *rtogs* "understanding."

Whatever (can be and) is spoken of is metaphorical (in character),  
 What is needed is something that makes (us) understand the unspoken;  
 Whatever is labelled (as this or that) by the intellect makes up the wel-  
 ter of concepts,  
 What is needed is something that is beyond the intellect;  
 Whatever is fabricated is an assemblage (of parts),  
 What is needed is something that is not fabricated but is self-origi-  
 nated;<sup>119</sup>

<sup>119</sup> A hermeneutical interpretation of the technical term *rang-byung* has been given by Padmasambhava in his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 257b–258a:

*rang ni thog-ma'i ye-yod gzhi*  
*byung ni yid-tsam de yod-tsam*  
*rang ni dngos-med kun-khyab gzhi*  
*byung ni gzhi-la gnas-pa'i rlung*  
*rang ni yid-tsam [258a] g.yo-ba'i gzhi*  
*byung ni bag-tsam 'byung-bar byung*  
*rang ni kun-gzhi spyi-khyab te*  
*byung ni rang-snang 'od-lnga byung*  
*rang ni 'od-kyi dkyil-'khor te*  
*byung ni 'od-las zer-du byung*  
*rang ni zer-lna'i rang-bzhin te*  
*byung ni shes-pa'i snang-tshul-lna'o*  
*rang ni ye'i shes-pa de*  
*byung ni gnas-pa'i don ma-rig*  
*de-phyir ma-rig 'khrul-par gsungs*  
*rang ni ma-rig 'khrul-pa'i sgo*  
*byung ni rig yid sems-su byung*  
*rang ni 'khrul-lugs mam-gsum te*  
*byung ni khams-gsum 'khor-bar byung*  
*rang ni rang-gi sems yin te*  
*byung ni rtog-tshogs brgyad-khri byung*  
*rang ni ma-rig 'khor-ba'i sems*  
*byung ni nyon-mongs brgyad-khri byung*

*rang* means (Being's) primordially existent beingness,  
*byung* means the (Being's) momentarily existent beingness;  
*rang* means (Being's) immaterial, all-encompassing (omnipresent) beingness,  
*byung* means the motility in this beingness;  
*rang* means (Being's) momentarily trembling beingness,  
*byung* means its subtle eruptiveness;  
*rang* means (one's) collective encompassing (omnipresent) ontic foundation,  
*byung* means the five luminosities of its auto-presencing;  
*rang* means the organized pattern (mandala) of these luminosities,  
*byung* means the rays of light that burst forth from these luminosities;  
*rang* means these rays of light as rays of light,  
*byung* means the emergence of (their) five cognitive (qualities);  
*rang* means (their) originary awareness modes,  
*byung* means the non-awareness of (their) reality (as our real being);

Therefore this non-awareness is said to be (our) errancy  
*rang* means the gate (through which our) non-awareness goes astray,

Whatever is (said to be a) realization<sup>120</sup> is some laboriously (effected) realization,

What is needed is something that has nothing to do with laboriously (effected) realizations;

Whatever is a laboriously (effected) realization is wishfulness,

What is needed is something that is non-referential and lies beyond the scope of (ego-centered) rational thought.<sup>121</sup>

“Poetry, creative literature, is nothing but the elementary emergence into words, the becoming-uncovered, of existence as being-in-the world. For the others who before it were blind, the world first be-

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*byung* means (our cognitive-spiritual) excitability, ego-logical mentation, and the background potential;

*rang* (thus) means the three modes of one’s going astray,

*byung* means the three (worldly) spheres (of desire, aesthetic forms, and formlessness) as samsara;

*rang* means one’s own mind,

*byung* means (its) eighty-thousand notions;

*rang* means (this) non-awareness, one’s samsaric mind,

*byung* means the eighty-thousand emotional pollutants.

Padmasambhava’s interpretation of *rang-byung* appears to stress the “negative” aspect of the whole’s dynamics. This view would seem to be reinforced by the statement in his *Nyi-zla’i snying-po* 3, 30b:

*sngon-thog ming-med chos-nyid skye-med-la*

*rang-byung rang-rtsal yan-lag rol-pa’i chos*

*blos brtags ’khrul-pa yin-pas la-zlo bshad*

Since in (Being’s) primordially, for which there is no name, (Being’s) giving birth to thoughts/meanings without itself being something that is born,

The play of (Being’s) self-originated functionality in (what is its) branchings

Is (its) errancy initiated by the (egocentric) intellect, I declare that this (hurdle) has to be leapt over.

But, as the lengthy discourse that follows shows, the thrust is in the direction of the “No,” the *Erleben*.

<sup>120</sup> In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 211a, he explicitly states that by these “realizations” the three patterns or proto-structures of a live person’s humanity are meant:

*sku-gsum bsgrubs-pas sangs-mi-rgyas*

*de dang bral-ba’i chos gcig dgos*

By the realization of the three proto-structures (of one’s humanity) [as if they were some “things”] one does not grow into the fullness of one’s being.

What is needed is something that has nothing to do with these sorts of things.

<sup>121</sup> With this truly anti-reductionist statement Padmasambhava stands alone in the history of Buddhist thought that had already become alarmingly narrow and dogmatic in India before his time, just as it did later in Tibet. However, in recent times, his insight has turned up with outstanding scientists (notably, physicists) and thinkers like Roger Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind* and *Shadows of the Mind: A Search for the Missing Science of Consciousness*, Roger S. Jones, *Physics for the Rest of Us*, and Erich Harth, *The Creative Loop*, to mention only a few.

comes visible by what is thus spoken.”<sup>122</sup> These words by the late Martin Heidegger well sum up Padmasambhava’s concern with Man/human’s being in the (anthropic) world. As already noted before, this concern can be made explicit by two different approaches. The one starts from experience as an *Erleben/Erlebnis* that, quite literally, “speaks,” the other starts from a “description” of the *Erleben/Erlebnis* as experience reflected-upon. It is here that the difference between symbol and simile becomes most pronounced, as Padmasambhava himself, for whom what we tend to separate into cosmogony and anthropogony, is so inextricably intertwined that the one is as much ontological as it is phenomenological, explicitly states. His words are:<sup>123</sup>

... the (inner) meaning of all existential treatises is (summed up in the notions of) Being and (Being’s) holomovement,<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, pp. 171–172.

<sup>123</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 5a:

... rgyud thams-cad-kyi don/ gzhi dang gzhi-snang-chen-po’i ’dug-tshul nga-yis smra

<sup>124</sup> The technical term for “(Being’s) holomovement”—I have borrowed the term “holomovement” from David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*—is *gzhi-snang-chen-po*. The emphatic *chen-po* makes it clear that it is Being-as-a-whole (*gzhi*) that is “lighting up” (*snang*), this lighting-up being the whole’s “functionality” (*rtsal*). In his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 3b, Padmasambhava explicates this functionality as follows:

rtsal ni gzhi’i rtsal de rtogs ’khrul gnyis  
rtogs-pa longs-sku’i sa-zin thugs-rje-yis  
’gro-ba don byas chos-sku-nyid-du thim  
ma-rtogs rtsal ni ’khrul-pa’i rgyu-rkyen-gyis  
khams-gsum ’khor-ba’i gnas-su dug-lngas rang-rgyud bsreg  
ngan-rtsal de-las bzang-po’i rtsal-dag-gis  
sgrol-ba’i thabs-su gnyen-po theg-pa’i bye-brag bstan

Functionality means Being’s functionality that is twofold: understanding and errancy.

(As) understanding, it operates as concerned spirituality from its basis (that is the experiencer’s) bodily experienced awareness of the possibilities-for-being-and-communicating for the sake of the living and

Once it has done so subsides in the very fore-structure of (the experiencer’s bodily felt) humanity.

(As) non-understanding, this functionality, (under the impact of the) causes and conditions of (its) errancy,

It consumes one’s existentiality wherever it may find itself in the stations of sam-sara comprising the three planes (of desires, aesthetic forms, and no-form) by its five poisons.

As an aid to setting (the living beings) free from this negative functionality (of Being) by way of (its) positive functionality, different spiritual pursuits have been taught.

and he then goes on to elaborate this statement by saying:<sup>125</sup>

I am (now) going to explicate the similes and symbols of Being and (Being's) holomovement.

From all that has been said so far, it need hardly be emphasized again that there is no rigid dividing line between Being and (Being's) holomovement or, what is the same, (Being's) functionality. Rather, we are faced with a non-separability and non-eliminability that our language is unable to convey. The same holds true for simile and symbol; that which may be "seen" as a simile, in one case, may be "felt" as a symbol, in another case. A consequence of this intertwining is that, on closer inspection, the listing of the abundance of similes, singling out specific points in the experiential process, follows this very process as it expresses itself in its allegorical presentation and vividness.

Let us once again begin with an allegory and then, against its background, detail the rich world of similes. The allegory (as a telling experience (*man-ngag*) of what goes on deep within a person's psyche) runs as follows:<sup>126</sup>

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It seems that here Padmasambhava has anticipated the modern principle of self-regulation, which Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) expressed poetically in his poem *Palmos* (1803, printed 1808):

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst  
Das Rettende auch  
(Where there is danger, there also  
Grows the saving force)

<sup>125</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 6b:

*ngas gzhi dang gzhi-snang-chen-po'i dpe dang brda' bshad-par bya'o*

<sup>126</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 12b–13a:

*yul yangs-pa chen-po padma-bde-gsal-gyi grong-khyer-na/ [13a] rgyal-po nor-bu  
'od-ldan zhes-bya-ba bzhugs-pas/ khong-la nor-bu rin-po-che'i za-ma-tog chen-po  
gcig rin-po-che phra-ma mang-pos bkang-nas yod-pa-la khong phyi-rol-du zhabs-  
'chag-cing yul gzigs-su byon-pa-las/ rgan-mo ling-tog-can bya-ba dang 'phrad-  
nas/ rgan-mos sla'o la brid/ rkun-mo mi-Ingas bar-du za-ma-tog brkus/ sme-sha-  
can-gyi grong-khyer drug-tu mun-pa'i mi drug-la bstongs/ mun-pa'i mi drug-gis  
nor-bu-la mchod-pa dang bkur-sti chag/ nor-bu-la yang dgos-'dod ma-byung/  
khong yang yid cung the-tsom zos-so/ physis rgyal-po-la ldam-po gcig byung/ rgyal-  
po thugs nur-te/ rgan-mo bsad/ grong-khyer drug bcoms/ mun-pa'i mi drug-la  
chab-bsal/ rkun-mo lnga bran-du bkol/ nor-bu rin-po-che dang phrad-nas yul  
bzung-ba'i man-ngag*

In the country "Enormous vastness"<sup>127</sup> there resided in the city "Lotus-bliss-radiance"<sup>128</sup> a king whose name was "He who is of the nature of the luminosity of the (wish-granting) Jewel." (Although) he had a huge basket in which was lying the precious (wish-granting) Jewel and which was also full of many smaller precious stones, he (once) went outside to take a stroll and to have a look at his country. There he met an old woman whose name was "She who is of the nature of amaurosis." This old woman easily seduced him. In the meantime five female thieves<sup>129</sup> stole the basket and sold it to six male persons of darkness in the six cities of the unclean.<sup>130</sup> The six male persons of darkness discontinued to show respect to and to honor the (wish-granting) Jewel and, in turn, this Jewel no longer provided what one desired. The king, too, became faint-hearted<sup>131</sup> and depressed. Later, on behalf of the king a charismatic person<sup>132</sup> turned up. The king's (non-egological) mind<sup>133</sup> started dancing (with joy). He killed the old woman, subjugated the six cities, lustrated<sup>134</sup> the six male persons of darkness, and employed the five female thieves as servants.

This is the telling experience of winning a kingdom by recovering the precious (wish-granting) Jewel.

<sup>127</sup> "Vastness" (*yangs-pa*, more frequently, *yangs-pa-can*) is an allusion to the country of *Vaiśālī* where Buddhism originated.

<sup>128</sup> The "lotus" (*padma*) is a symbol for the "heart." Its eight petals present the eight perceptual patterns as listed and developed in the Indian *Yogācāra* (*Vijñānavāda*) system of thought. The city's name sums up the individual's thinking (lotus), feeling (bliss), and impact on others (radiance).

<sup>129</sup> These are the five sensory *functions* whose structure is the "six male persons of darkness," each function corresponding to its *structure* with the sixth "person" being the ego that holds the structures and their functions together. Again we can see here the principle of complementarity at work, the fluidity of function and the rigidity of structure, femininity and masculinity. The reference to the "six cities of the unclean" intimates that structure and function do not operate in a vacuum.

<sup>130</sup> *sme-sha-can* "having spotted flesh." In the Indian context this term (for which there is no Sanskrit equivalent) refers to the members of the lowest caste. In the Tibetan context this term seems to refer to persons suffering from leprosy.

<sup>131</sup> *yid-cung*. Literally rendered this phrase means that the king's ego-centered mind became small, that is, was deflated. In modern terms, the theft of the casket with the (wish-granting) Jewel was a "blow to his ego."

<sup>132</sup> *ldam-po*. This word, not listed in any dictionary, seems, according to the overall character of this allegory, to refer to a Manichaean missionary. Manichaeism was widespread in Central Asia at the time of Padmasambhava, although already on the retreat from the areas that were conquered by Islam.

<sup>133</sup> Note the difference in diction: the king's deflated ego (*yid*) and the king's dancing (non-egological) mind (*thugs*).

<sup>134</sup> *chab-bsal*. This term, also not listed in any dictionary, may well refer to the ritual act of baptism, as it was practised in certain Gnostic circles with whose teaching Padmasambhava was acquainted. Nothing further can be gained from the hapax legomena *ldam-po* (see note 132) and *chab-bsal*.

A cursory glance at this allegory reveals the fact that it is quite different from the allegories we have dealt with before. The events do not take place in or begin to move from the pleromatic world, but are quite literally “down-to-earth” happenings. Yet the underlying dynamics are the same as that which led to the enworlding: from an utter nothingness-plenitude, the zero-point energy of the vacuum. Through its very energy a symmetry break in its sheer immensity-intensity, amounting to a loss in intensity, is initiated, which is felt as a movement in the direction of his finitude by the omnipresent experiencer. When this movement has reached a critical point, through the whole’s self-regulatory dynamics, this critical point becomes a “turning point” that re-directs the energy in the direction from which it has started, where, however, this movement will not stop but will lead to self-transcendence. This triune process—descent  $\Rightarrow$  crisis situation  $\Rightarrow$  ascent—underlies Padmasambhava’s arrangement of the similes that gain added significance by their having been taken from the worldly context, but he imbues this context with meaning that always transcends this context and, in so doing, opens our eyes to that which itself is “beyond compare” and which is always felt to be a presence. There are various expressions to mark similes and metaphors, of which *lta-bu* is used as a discrete form of comparison, while the particle *bzhin* and the verb *'dra* suggest a far more pervasive aspect of language and perception. Lastly, the fact that Padmasambhava devotes whole chapters to similes, shows the high esteem he has had of this linguistic device. Specifically, he uses this device to elaborate the intertwining notions of Being (*gzhi*) and Being’s holomovement (*gzhi-snang*), of (the whole’s) *Da-sein* (*gnas-lugs*) and (its) coming-to-presence (*snang-tshul*).<sup>135</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Strictly speaking, a ternary relationship is pre-supposed. This is evident from Padmasambhava’s rather laconic statement in his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 82a:

*'dug-tshul sku dang ye-shes-la*  
*snang-tshul sku-lnga ye-shes-lngar shar-bas*  
*rtogs-tshul gnyis-med chen-por rtogs te*  
*dbye-ba med-pa'i tshul shes-pa'o*

Since (our) existential thereness, the fore-structure (of our humanity) and its originary awareness,

Comes-to-presence as five (functional) fore-structures and their originary awareness modes,

The understanding (of this “duality”) is an utterly non-dual understanding,

Which means to know the indivisibility (of thereness) and (its) coming-to-presence.

He illustrates Being and Being's holomovement in the following words:<sup>136</sup>

Imperturbable like the depth of the ocean;  
 "Empty"<sup>137</sup> and omnipresent and immense like the sky;  
 Flawless like a crystal,<sup>138</sup>

He goes on to say that this understanding (*rtogs*) is a process of maturation and individuation:

*dri-ma med-pa'i rig-pa-la sku dang ye-shes-su gnas kyang/ don gnyis-su med-par gsal te/ sa-bon 'bras-bur smin-la 'bras-bu 'gyur-ba med-par gnas-pa ni/ me-tog padma 'dra-bar 'od-'bar te/ ma-smin-pa smin-par byas-so*

Although (our) supraconscious ecstatic intensity abides as the fore-structure (of our humanity) and its (inherent) originary awareness, this our (existential) reality shines in a non-dual manner. When a seed has ripened into its fruit, the fruit is there in an unchanging state; (similarly, our existential reality) is a blazing light, like a full-blown lotus flower—that which has not been mature has been made mature.

<sup>136</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 6b–7a):

*mi-g.yo-ba rgya-mtsho-chen-po'i gting lta-bu  
 stong-pa khyab-pa dang yangs-pa nam-mkha' lta-bu'o  
 dri-ma med-pa man-shel lta-bu'o  
 dag-cing gsal-la ma-reg-pa me-long lta-bu'o  
 sna-tshogs-su snang yang dri-mas ma-gos-pa padma lta-bu'o  
 'gyur-ba med-pa glang-po'am rdo-rje lta-bu'o  
 thams-cad 'byung-bas sa-gzhi lta-bu'o  
 dngos-su mi-snang-la byin-rlabs-las 'byung-ba yid-bzhin-gyi nor-bu lta-bu'o  
 brtan-pa ri-bo lta-bu'o*

<sup>137</sup> We may speak of an "empty sky," but the Tibetan term *stong-pa* is not a container metaphor ("empty") but a dynamic concept, a feeling-tone: "not allowing permanent structures to persist." Like the two other adjectives, "omnipresent" (*khyab-pa*) and "immense" (*yangs-pa*), *stong-pa* is more of an "adverb," a vector feeling-tone in Whitehead's diction.

<sup>138</sup> In the narrower sense of the word, the crystal is an image for the supraconscious ecstatic intensity that we are (*rang-rig*) and is "felt" as the fore-structure of our humanity (*chos-sku*). In a wider sense it also is an image for our spirituality as a mirror of our wholeness (*thugs-kyi me-long*). Padmasambhava is quite explicit on this point. In his *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 34ab, he says:

*thugs-kyi me-long man-shel 'di  
 chos-sku dngos ni ma-yin te  
 'di nyid cir-'drar shes-par bya  
 man-shel phyi-nang med-pa ltar  
 rang-gi rig-pa chos-sku yang  
 phyi-nang med-par shes-par bya  
 man-shel mdun-rgyab med-pa ltar  
 chos-sku yang ni mdun-rgyab med  
 man-shel zang-thal gsal-ba bzhin  
 chos-sku dri-med dag-pa zang-thal yin  
 'dir nang-med nang-na rkyen-med 'od-lnga gsal-ba ltar  
 chos-sku zang-thal nang-na ni  
 sku-gsum nang-gsal-du ni gnas-pa ste*

In its purity and brilliance intangible like a mirror,<sup>139</sup>  
 Although lighting up in (a) multiplicity (of presences) it is not sullied  
 by any stains like a lotus flower;  
 (Unbudgeable and) unvarying like an elephant or a diamond;  
 Since everything derives from it, it is like the earth;  
 Not coming-to-presence as some particular existent, but coming about  
 in a feeling of transport, it is like the wish-granting Jewel;  
 Solid like a rock.<sup>140</sup>

Padmasambhava now continues his list of similes by using the particle *bzhin*, suggesting continuance. His words are:<sup>141</sup>

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*stong-pa ye-shes snying-po-can-du shes-par gyis*  
*dpe 'di'i nang-nas 'od-linga phyi-ru 'char-ba ltar*  
*chos-kyi sku-las gzugs-sku gnyis*  
*gdul-bya gnyis-la snang-ba'o*

This crystal, the mirror that is our spirituality,  
 Is not the actual fore-structure of our humanity.  
 How is this image to be understood?

In the same manner as a crystal [in its transparency] has neither an inside nor an outside,

So also the supraconscious ecstatic intensity that we are and “feel” as the fore-structure of our humanity

Must be known as having neither an outside nor an inside, and

In the same manner as a crystal [in its transparency] has neither a front nor a back,  
 So also the fore-structure of our humanity has neither a front nor a back.

In this fore-structure of our humanity that is “nothing”

The three fore-structures (of our becoming enworlded) are there as an inner brilliance—

Know them to be the zero-point energy (of the vacuum), (its) originary awareness modes, and (its) energy-(in-action).

What this simile wants to illustrate is that in the same manner as five luminosities (spread their light) outside from within (the whole that is Being),

From out of the fore-structure of our humanity the two (sensuously perceived) patterns (of a process of becoming enworlded)

Are coming-to-the-fore (for the benefit) of those who are going to be affected by them.

<sup>139</sup> Regarding the image or simile of the mirror, see also the preceding note. In the passage quoted there Padmasambhava had spoken of the mirror as being one’s mind/spirituality (*thugs-kyi me-long*). In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 255a, he speaks of the whole’s energy as having the character of a mother (*snying-po ma-yi rang-bzhin*) and being of the nature of a mirror. On fol. 255b, he sums up his lengthy hermeneutical dissertation by speaking of a *'phrul-gyi me-long*, a “magic” mirror.

<sup>140</sup> This line is separated by two lines from the above. I have placed this line here because all the similes mentioned so far are marked by *lta-bu*.

<sup>141</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 6b–7a:

*rang-gi ngo-bo gsal-la mi-'gag-pa nyi-ma'i snying-po bzhin-no*  
*rgyun-chad med-pa chu-bo bzhin-no*  
*gcig du-mar snang-la nyi-zla bzhin-no*  
*gcig kun-la khyab-pa chu-yi lbu-ba-la byad-kyi gzugs-brnyan bzhin-no*

- Since the substance of the whole (that by implication is) us does not cease radiating, it is like the sun's energy (and since)
- Its continuity is unbroken, it is like a river.
- Since, though being a single (reality), (the whole) comes-to-presence as a multiplicity, it is like sun and moon;
- Since, though being a single (reality), (the whole) is omnipresent (and pervasive of everything), it is like the reflection of (one's) face in (each and every) water bubble.
- The fact that (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings presences as the fore-structure of one's humanity, is like the sun having risen in a mirror;
- The fact that (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, is co-extensive with the fore-structure of one's humanity, is like (the presence of) butter in milk;
- The fact that the energy of (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings is there as (the whole's) ekstatic excitation/intensity, is like the sky with the sun in it;
- The fact that (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, undivided by dichotomizing thought, is broken down by the (whole's) functionality (becoming) the fore-structure of one's humanity, is like (the bluntness of) a razor's back and (the sharpness of its) blade.
- The fact that (the whole) is completeness without being a confused medley, (means that it) is like the pavilions and figures in a piece of brocade.
- The fact that (the whole) lights up as a multiplicity of presences without (their forming) a duality, (means that it) is like a tree and its shadow.
- The fact that the fluctuations of the (whole's) functionality derive from (the wholeness that is) Being (itself), is like the gathering of rivulets in a lake.

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*chos-nyid-la chos-skur shar-ba ni me-long-la nyi-ma shar-ba bzhzin-no*  
*chos-nyid-la chos-skus khyab-pa ni 'o-ma dang mar bzhin-no*  
*chos-nyid-kyi snying-po rig-par gnas-pa ni nam-mkha' dang nyi-ma bzhin-no*  
*chos-nyid mi-rtog-pa-la chos-sku'i rtсал gcod-pa ni spu-gri'i ltug-pa dang so bzhin-*  
*no*  
*ma-'dres-pa-la rdzogs-pa ni za-'og-gi gur-khyim dang gzugs-brnyan bzhin-no*  
*sna-tshogs-su snang-ba-la gnyis-su med-pa ni shing-gi grib-ma bzhin-no*  
*gzhi-las rtсал 'du-'phro-ba ni rgya-mtsho-la chu-phran 'du-ba bzhin-no*  
*gzhi-la sku-gsum rdzogs-pa ni nyi-ma'i snying-po-la 'od-zer mi-'gag-pa bzhin-no*  
*ngo-bo rang-bzhin thugs-rje gsum-gyi dpe ni rma-bya'i sgo-nga'am nyi-ma'am*  
*nam-mkha'i sprin dang char bzhin-no/yang na man-shel bzhin-no*  
*'khor-'das gnyis skyon-yon-du shar yang ngo-bo gcig gcig-pa ni ga-bur bzhin-no*  
*gnas-lugs dang snang-tshul ni mar-me dang me-long bzhin-no*  
*rig-pa dang ye-shes-kyi dpe ni gser dang ser-po bzhin-no*  
*sku-gsum ngo-bo rang-nyid yin [7a] yang ngo-ma-shes-pa rgyal-bu dmangs-su*  
*'khyams-pa bzhin-no*

The fact that the three fore-structures (of our existentiality)<sup>142</sup> are completely present in (the wholeness that is) Being is like the rays of light ceaselessly radiating from the energy of the sun.

[A simile for the untrinity of Being, the “stuff” it is made of, its own most unique possibility-to-be, and its concerned spirituality, is a peacock’s egg, the sun, the sky’s clouds and rain, or (simply) a crystal].<sup>143</sup>

The fact that there is the emergence of the duality of samsara and nirvana with (its interpretation of the one) being an imperfection (and the other) an impeccability, (means that the wholeness that is Being) is like camphor.<sup>144</sup>

(Being’s) *Da-sein* and (Being’s) coming-to-presence is like a lamp and a mirror.

A simile for (the whole’s) supraconscious ek-static intensity and its originary awareness modes is like gold and its yellowness.

Although the three fore-structures of one’s existentiality are what is the very “stuff” (Being is made of), their non-recognition is like a prince’s wandering (aimlessly) about amongst the populace.

Padmasambhava concludes this catalogue-like listing of similes with four additional similes by which, in spite of the explicit comparisons they suggest, he attempt to undermine any tendency to concretize what must be experienced as a process, not as something static, though the spoken or written language is unable to keep the experiential process alive. His words are:<sup>145</sup>

Since it has not come about through causes and conditions, (Being) is like the atmosphere that, too, is no construct whatsoever;

<sup>142</sup> These are the well-known *chos-sku*, *longs-sku*, and *sprul-sku*.

<sup>143</sup> This passage is an interpolation by some later hand. Not only is it different in style from the rest of text, it also uses an image (“a peacock’s egg”) not found elsewhere in Padmasambhava’s writings. Lastly, against the overwhelming number of the statements in which the facets constituting Being’s untrinity are listed as *rang-bzhin* ⇒ *ngo-bo* ⇒ *thugs-rje*, they are listed here as *ngo-bo* ⇒ *rang-bzhin* ⇒ *thugs-rje*. There are only two other instances: the one is the *Nyi-zla 'bar-ba*, 2: 345a; the other is the *sGron-ma brtsegs-pa*, 2: 325a. But on fol. 331a of this work the “sequence” is *rang-bzhin* ⇒ *ngo-bo* ⇒ *thugs-rje*.

<sup>144</sup> Depending on circumstances camphor can act as a healing substance or as poison.

<sup>145</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 7a:

*rgyu-rkyen gang-gis ma-skyes-pa bar-snang 'dus-ma-byas-pa lta-bu'o*  
*rang-gi ngo-bo dus-gsum-du 'gyur-ba med-pas gser lta-bu'o*  
*ming gang-du yang ma-thogs-pas rgyus-med-kyi yul-du phyin-pa lta-bu'o*  
*dgos-'dod rang-la yod kyang spyod-par ma-phan-pa gyad-kyi nor-bu lta-bu'o*

Since the “stuff” of Being (and, by implication, the “stuff” we ourselves are) made of, remains invariant throughout the three aspects of time), (Being) is like gold;

Since there is no name for it, (Being) is like (one’s) arriving in a country of which one has had no news;

Since whatever one needs is already (pre-)existent in Being (and, by implication, in the Being-that-we-are), there is no point in taking the trouble to effect (what is needed), (which means that Being is) like a jewel among champions.

Certainly, in the hands of a skilled person like Padmasambhava, the use of a simile with its rich imagery can be very powerful. Of course, the full impact of the use of this literary device is felt and seen only in reading or listening to the original texts. As an instance of Padmasambhava’s poetic genius the following words by him may illustrate this claim:<sup>146</sup>

The *Da-sein* of Being-in-general<sup>147</sup> resembles camphor

<sup>146</sup> *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 280a:

*spyi-yi gnas-lugs ga-bur 'dra*  
*smān 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*  
*sangs-rgyas sems-can spyi-sar gcig*  
*rkyen-gyis 'char-sgo 'khrul-sgor snang*  
  
*spyi-gzhi nam-mkha' lta-bu-las*  
*rtsal-snang skar skye'i tshul-du byung*  
*rlung g.yos nam-mkha' go-phye-nas*  
*rig yid bskyod-pa'i rtсал gnyis byung*  
  
*ye-shes 'jam-rlung rang-grol-gyi*  
*rig-pa rang-shar 'dzin-med-du*  
*rang ngo-shes-pas ye-shes shar*  
  
*rang ni rlung-gis 'gyu ma-nus*  
*kha-rlangs nam-mkhar yal-ba 'dra*  
*yid gnyis rtog-par 'phyo ma-nus*  
*ser-bu bar-snang dangs-pa 'dra*  
*sems-kyis yul-la 'dzin ma-nus*  
*'ja'-tshon mkha'-la dag-pa 'dra*  
*rtсал-snang gar yang 'gro-ba med*  
*rba-rlabs rgya-mishor thim-pa 'dra*

<sup>147</sup> The printed *spyi-yi* is an obvious misspelling for *spyi-gzhi* that stands at the beginning of each of the two following stanzas and thus, according to the rules of Indian poetics, forms an alliteration, highly appreciated by the Tibetans. As we shall see, Padmasambhava distinguishes between *spyi-gzhi*, here rendered as “Being-in-general” and pointing to the utter, nonetheless immanent transcendence of wholeness, and *spyi-*

(In which its) healing power and poisoning power are as yet not broken apart.

Both are one and the same in the common level (that is us in our beingness):

Under (the impact of) whatever conditions (this "entity") encounters, it makes its presence felt as a duality.

In Being-in-general (that in its) namelessness is (also) the common level (that is us in our beingness),

There is as yet no split whatsoever into samsara and nirvana:

The (status of being) a spiritually awake person (*sangs-rgyas*) and the (status of being) a person in the clutches of his ego-prone mentation (*sems-can*) are (still) one and the same in the common level (that is us in our beingness):

Under (the impact of) certain conditions-the gate (through which the whole's light that we are) shines and the gate (through which we) go astray (into spiritual darkness) come-to-presence.

Out of Being-in-general that is like the (open and immense) sky

The lighting up of its functionality comes about in the manner of stars (appearing in the sky);

Once the sky has been opened up through the stirring of its motility

The (whole's) dual functionality as ek-static intensity (*rig*) and ego-logical enframing (*yid*) comes about.

With the gentle breeze-like motility of (the whole's) originary awareness modes dissipating by itself, (it is)

By recognizing that the self-presencing of (the whole's) ek-static intensity has nothing to do with an ego-logical appropriation,

That (the whole's) originary awareness modes are self-presencing (in their sheer functionality).

(To the extent that) Being-in-itself is unable to be agitated by its (inherent) motility,

It resembles (a person's) breath dissipating in the air;

(To the extent that) the two aspects of ego-logical mentation<sup>148</sup> are unable to develop into the conceptualism of dichotomic thinking,

It resembles the wind clearing the atmosphere;

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*sa* "the common level (that is us in our beingness)," a kind of closure of the whole's transcendence into its immanence. Different from both *spyi-gzhi* and *spyi-sa*, though the dividing lines are extremely fluid, is the *kun-gzhi*, our "ontic foundation" that undergoes a further "closure" by becoming our psychic "background" or *sems* with much of the (original) whole's luminous intensity lost.

<sup>148</sup> Obviously the two operations of what is termed *yid* are meant here: the one brings the notion of being this or that to the data of the senses, the other deals with these notions affectively. The technical term for this aspect is *nyon-yid*.

(To the extent that) the ontic mind is unable to hold to its object (and to materialize into a subject-object relationship),  
 It resembles the rainbow shining in the sky;  
 (To the extent that) the coming to presence of its functionality has no place to go (and come to a dead end there),  
 It resembles the waves subsiding (again) in the lake (from which they have surged).

Once again Padmasambhava sets up what, at first glance, seems to be just a lengthy list of similes, but which, on closer inspection, reveals an internal logic that reflects the dual movement of the whole's becoming enworlded in terms of its psychological tenor and of its regaining its autonomy. The first movement is elaborated in the following words:<sup>149</sup>

If one does not become settled in (one's) *Da-sein*  
 One resembles a feather carried away by the wind;  
 If one does not distinguish between one's ontic foundation and the fore-structure of one's humanity  
 One resembles a mixture of water and milk;<sup>150</sup>

<sup>149</sup> *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 285a:

*gnas-lugs gtan-la ma-phebs-na*  
*bya-sgro rlung-gis khyer-ba 'dra*  
*kun-gzhi chos-sku ma-phyed-na*  
*chu dang 'o-ma 'dres-pa 'dra*  
*'khrul-pa rtsad-nas ma-chod-na*  
*ljon-shing yal-ga bregs-pa 'dra*  
*sems dang sems-nyid ma-phyed-na*  
*bu-ram brang-rtsi 'dres-pa 'dra*  
*ma-rig ye-shes ma-phyed-na*  
*gser dang g.ya'-ru 'dres-pa 'dra*  
*sems dang bag-chags ma-phyed-na*  
*dug dang sman-du 'dres-pa 'dra*  
*'khor-'das bye-brag ma-phyed-na*  
*mkha'-la bgrod-par 'dod-pa 'dra*  
*lta-mkhan rang-ngos ma-zin-na*  
*dmus-long thang-stong bor-ba 'dra*  
*sgom-mkhan rang-ngos ma-zin-na*  
*ri-dvags smig-rgyu bnyegs-pa 'dra*  
*spyod-mkhan rang-ngos ma-zin-na*  
*ri-dvags rgya-la chud-pa 'dra*  
*sgrub-mkhan rang-ngos ma-zin-na*  
*khyung-chen nam-mkha'i mtha' 'tshol 'dra*  
*'bras-bu rang-ngos ma-zin-na*  
*rgyal-bu rkang-'khyams spyod-pa 'dra*

<sup>150</sup> This is obviously an allusion to the practice of the milkman (*dūdhvālā*) in India who, in order to supply as many customers as possible with the limited amount of milk

If one does not eradicate (one's tendency to) go astray  
 One resembles (a person) trimming the branches of a fruit tree.

If one does not distinguish between one's (ego-logical) psychic back-  
 ground and thinking's thinking

One resembles a mixture of molasses and honey;

If one does not distinguish between one's unknowing and one's origi-  
 nary awareness

One resembles a lumping together of gold and rusty metal;

If one does not distinguish between one's (ego-logical) psychic back-  
 ground and its sedimented patterns of (ego-logical) experiencing

One resembles a mixture of poisoning and healing (substances).

If one does not clearly distinguish between samsara and nirvana

One resembles a person desiring to walk in the sky.

If one does not recognize the one who does the looking

One resembles a blind person lost in a desert;

If one does not recognize the one who does the imaging

One resembles a gazelle chasing a mirage;

If one does not recognize the one who does the acting (on what he  
 looks at and what he images)

One resembles a gazelle caught in a snare;

If one does not recognize the one who does the realizing

One resembles the *khyung-chen* bird searching for the limits of the  
 sky;

If one does not recognize one's goal

One resembles a prince walking (in a crowd).

No less impressive are the similes Padmasambhava uses to illustrate  
 the self-sufficiency of wholeness and the wealth it holds for the ex-  
 perienter. And so he immediately continues:<sup>151</sup>

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the single cow in his possession is able to provide, by thinning it with water. The end  
 result is always the same, latest by the end of the month you throw the supplier out and  
 look for a new one to start the same game all over again.

<sup>151</sup> *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 285a-b:

*gnas-lugs phyogs-bral kun-rdzogs kyang*

*rgya-chad med-pas nor-bu 'dra*

*dbyings-kyi klong-las 'das-pa med*

*mkha'-la bya-yis 'phur-ba 'dra*

*kun-gzhi 'khor-'das 'byung-gzhir yod*

*kun-'byung rgyal-po'i bang-mdzod 'dra*

*chos-sku skye-med mu-mtha' stongs*

*ldog-med bse-shing 'bras-bu 'dra*

*'khrul-[285b] rtsa ngar-'dzin rtsad-nas bcad*

*sdong-po rtsad-nas bcad-pa 'dra*

*sems ni mam-shes tshogs-brgyad de*

The *Da-sein* that has no orientation points is complete in having everything and

Since it is an unbroken (whole) it resembles the wish-granting Jewel;  
Since its field-like dimensionality does not pass beyond the vortex  
(formed by it)<sup>152</sup>

It resembles a bird flying in the sky;

One's ontic foundation exists as the source of samsara and nirvana  
(and as)

The well of everything phenomenal it resembles a king's treasury.

The fore-structure of one's humanity that is unborn and devoid of any  
of the limitations set by the categories of rational thought,

Resembles the fruit of the *bse* tree that does not revert to being a seed;  
The radical eradication of (one's tendency to) go astray which is the  
belief in an ego

Resembles the radical eradication of a tree trunk.

One's (ego-logical) psychic background is the eight perceptual patterns  
(that in)

Their ceaseless operations resemble phantasmata in the sky;

Thinking's thinking surpasses the reach and range of what can be  
thought of and expressed in words (and),

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*'gag-med nam-mkha'i cho-'phrul 'dra*  
*sems-nyid smra-bsam yul 'das te*  
*skyon-bral nam-mkha' dag-pa 'dra*  
*ma-rig 'dzin-byed shes-pa ste*  
*mthong-med 'dzin-yod long-ba 'dra*  
*ye-shes gsal-dag zang-ka ste*  
*mkha'-la nyi-ma shar-ba 'dra*  
*sems ni 'khor-'das gnyis-kar 'gyur*  
*ras-dkar dri-ma med-pa 'dra*  
*bag-chags 'khor-ba'i sa-bon te*  
*mthong-med gnod-pa 'dre-rkun 'dra*  
*gnyis-'dzin rtog-pa 'khor-ba ste*  
*tho-yor mi-ru 'khrul-pa 'dra*  
*de-nyid grol-ba myang-'das te*  
*'khyag-rom chu-ru zhu-ba 'dra*  
*lta-mkhan ngos-zin grub-mtha' stor*  
*gzhi-med bar-snang nam-mkha' 'dra*  
*sgom-mkhan ngos-zin rang-sar grol*  
*chu-bur chu-la thim-pa 'dra*  
*spyod-mkhan ngos-zin mtshan-ma sangs*  
*rang-gi rol-pa gar-mkhan 'dra*  
*sgrub-mkhan ngos-zin 'du-'bral med*  
*mo-sham bu-yi chung-ma 'dra*  
*'bras-bu ngos-zin re-dogs chags*  
*rgyal-srid thob-pa'i rgyal-po 'dra*

<sup>152</sup> Instead of the printed *kvi* I read *ni*. The whole's field-like dimensionality is an "excitation" or vortex movement of the very whole.

In its flawlessness, resembles the clear sky.

One's unknowing (that is, one's spiritual unexcitability) is one's (innate) cognitive capacity that effects one's ego-logical appropriation (of what presences),

It resembles a blind person who (believes that he can) grasp the invisible;

One's originary awareness is, in its radiance and symbolic pregnance, an utter insubstantiality,

It resembles the rising of the sun in the sky.

One's (ego-logical) psychic background turns into the duality of samsara and nirvana,

It resembles a clean white piece of cloth;

The sedimentations (of one's ego-centered experiences) are the seeds of samsara,

They resemble thievish demons that by their invisibility do (immense) harm;

One's dichotomic thinking with its belief in duality is samsara,

It resembles one's mistaking a cairn for a person;

The dissipation of this very mistaking is nirvana,

It resembles ice dissolving into water.

If one recognizes the one who does the looking, (the hold the various) belief systems (have had on us) is lost, (one)

Resembles the atmosphere and the sky that are not grounded (anywhere);

If one recognizes the one who does the imaging, one dissolves in (what is one's legitimate) dwelling<sup>153</sup> (and one)

Resembles the dissipating of water bubbles in water;

If one recognizes the one who does the acting (on what he looks at and images), the (concern with) definable characteristics is gone (and)

The playfulness (*rol-pa*)<sup>154</sup> of one's Being resembles a dancer;

If one recognizes the one who does the realizing, there is no adding (to Being) and no subtracting (from it). (This means that one)

Resembles the spouse of the son of a barren woman;

If one recognizes one's goal, anticipations and fears are done with (and one)

Resembles a king who has won his kingdom.

Lastly, in a lengthy disquisition containing a plethora of similes arranged in sets of three,<sup>155</sup> Padmasambhava presents the unfolding of

<sup>153</sup> On this technical term (*rang-sa*) see above n. 109.

<sup>154</sup> Like its Sanskrit equivalent *lilā* this Tibetan term implies "gracefulness of movement" as well.

<sup>155</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2ab.

the multifaceted experience of ourselves as a process that evolves out of a primal as-yet undivided and indivisible ground (*gzhi*)<sup>156</sup> that in its unfragmented wholeness, namelessness, and universality (*spyi-gzhi*)<sup>157</sup> is a ground-that-is-not (*gzhi-med*)<sup>158</sup> that, however paradoxically it may sound, becomes and is our abiding Dasein (*gnas-lugs*)<sup>159</sup> which also doubles as our ontic foundation (*kun-gzhi*) and our existential reality or value (*don*). This value, in turn, doubles as the whole's sheer energy (*snying-po*) of which it is a presentation (not re-presentation) and as the whole's creativity or (its) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*).<sup>160</sup> This means that we are the whole and so many of its meanings.

<sup>156</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 207a:

*thog-ma'i gzhi-la dbyer-med-pas*  
*sangs-rgyas sems-can ming yang med*

Since there does not exist any divisibility in the primal ground,

There does not even exist a name for (a person who may be described as) being spiritually awake or (for a person who may be described as) being caught in his opinions.

<sup>157</sup> See above ns. 146 and 147.

<sup>158</sup> In his *Nyi-sla'i snying-po*, 3: 21b, Padmasambhava explicitly states:

*gzhi-med ngang-las kun-gzhi shar*

Out of the "ground-that-is-not," [the anthropocosmic whole's] disposition [to become alight], the "all-ground" has risen.

"All-ground" (*kun-gzhi*) may be understood as the "ground of all that is" and as our "ontic foundation," which is to say that we are the whole and its closure. The "ground-that-is-not" (*gzhi-med*) calls to mind Jakob Boehme's (1575–1624) *Ungrund* and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's (1755–1854) statement in *Sämmtliche Werke* VII 406:

Es muß vor allem Grund und vor allem Existierenden, also überhaupt vor aller Dualität ein Wesen sein; wie können wir es anders nennen als den Urgrund oder vielmehr Ungrund

(There must be before every ground and before everything existing some being; how else can we call it except primal ground or no-ground?)

In spite of the apparent similarity between the German idea of the *Ungrund* and Padmasambhava's "ground-that-is-not" (*gzhi-med*), Padmasambhava's idea is much more radical, as is the statement by Basilides, one of the first and greatest Alexandrian masters of Gnosticism (second century C.E. during the reign of the emperor Hadrian):

When I say nothing, I do not mean that there *was* nothing, but simply, crudely, totally that nothingness itself did not exist.

(Quotation from Jacques Lacarriere, *The Gnostics*, p. 60)

<sup>159</sup> On the exact meaning of *gnas-lugs* see Herbert Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, p. 195.

<sup>160</sup> The near-synonymy of all the Tibetan terms mentioned in this paragraph is well substantiated by Padmasambhava himself. In his *sNang-srid kha-sbyor* he speaks of the *kun-gzhi'i gnas-lugs* on fol. 207a, of the *snying-po don-gyi gnas-lugs* on fol.

Padmasambhava begins his disquisition with sets of three explicit similes/illustrative instances (*mtshon-dpe*) that, as is emphasized by the verb *mtshon* (“to demonstrate”), are meant to serve as pointers and to make the experiencer think and exercise his or her imagination. The first topic is, ontologically speaking, the “all-ground” and, experientially speaking, our “ontic foundation” (*kun-gzhi*). It is compared to “ice forming (on a lake),” “a treasury,” and “the earth.”<sup>161</sup>

The next topic is the Dasein (*gnas-lugs*) that is likened to “water,” an “ice-field,” and a “tiny sesame grain.”<sup>162</sup>

With these similes/illustrative instances for the *kun-gzhi* and the *gnas-lugs*—two contrary ideas that must be thought of together as a single dynamic notion that is split into two for “descriptive” purposes only—Padmasambhava has dealt with what is otherwise called by him “Being” (*gzhi*). He now illustrates the very dynamics of Being in its “lighting-up” (*snang-tshul*) or “holomovement” (*gzhi-snang*). Its three similes are a “pigeon’s neck,” a “crystal ball,” and “camphor.”<sup>163</sup>

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219/2a, and of the *chos-nyid don-gyi gnas-lugs* on fol. 219/2b, and in his *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 288b he speaks of the *gzhi-yi gnas-lugs* and the *dnagos-po gshis-kyi gnas-lugs*.

<sup>161</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2a:

*dar-chags bang-mdzod sa-gzhi gsum*

The term *bang-mdzod* is ambiguous; it may also mean a corn magazine or a storehouse in general. In the same work, to the question “how is the Dasein of the all-ground” (*kun-gzhi'i gnas-lugs ji-ltar lags*) the answer is given as

*bang-mdzod zhing-sa dar-chags gsum*  
*gzhi'i dpe-ru shes-par bgyis*

A grain magazine, a field ready for tilling, and ice forming (on a lake)—these three  
Are to be known as similes for Being (the “ground”).

In his *sNang-gsal spu-gri*, 2: 288b, Padmasambhava has enlarged this set of three into a set of four:

*mtsho-la dar-chags zhing-sa dang*  
*rgyal-po'i bang-mdzod gser dang bzhi*  
*gzhi-yi gnas-lugs mtshon-dpe gsungs*

Ice forming on a lake, soil ready for tilling,  
A king’s treasury and gold as a fourth  
Are said to be explicit similes of Being’s Dasein.

<sup>162</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2a:

*chu dang 'khyags-pa til-'bru gsum*

The implication seems to be that the Dasein is a process of the whole closing in on itself and thus becoming smaller and smaller and narrower and narrower.

<sup>163</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2a:

An almost inevitable consequence of this symmetry-breaking “event” is the experiencer’s going astray and losing himself in mistaken identifications (*'khrul-pa*). The three similes to illustrate this are a “cairn,” mistaken for a person, a “rope,” mistaken for a snake, and a “mirage” mistaken for water.<sup>164</sup>

In Padmasambhava’s thinking the idea of the whole’s emergent functionality (*rtsal-snang*) plays an important role. Unlike (the whole’s) going astray into mistaken identifications, initiating and marking the whole’s and, by implication, the experiencer’s ever increasing self-fragmentation—a sort of malfunctioning on the part of the whole,—the emergence of the whole’s functionality as the whole’s dynamics retains and emphasizes the feeling of an intimate

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*phug-ron-ske dang shel-sgong ga-bur gsum*

Here the “pigeon’s neck” and the “crystal ball” point to the shimmering of the multi-colored light in which the holomovement lights up, while “camphor,” a colorless crystalline compound, points to the emergence (not actual presence) of duality. The holomovement marks a symmetry break in the previously undivided whole. The image of a pigeon’s neck is found only with Padmasambhava.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*: *tho-yor thag-pa smig-rgyu gsum*.

A more elaborate statement is given by Padmasambhava in his *gTer-snying*, 2: 316ab:

*gzhi-la 'khor dang ma-'khrul med  
ka-dag ma-rtogs 'khrul-pa yin  
dngos-med ma-rtogs sdug-bsngal myong  
rnal-ma ma-rtogs 'khor-bar 'khyams  
dbye-bsal ma-rtogs ma-rig mun  
rang-sa ma-zin 'gro-drug 'khrul  
tho-yor thag-pa smig-rgyu gsum [316b]  
mi sbrul chur 'khrul dpe dang mtshungs  
gzhi-la med-de rtog-pas bzung  
nyes-skyon sdug-bsngal zad mtha'-yas*

In Being-as-such there is neither samsara nor the non-going-astray (i.e., nirvana):

Not understanding (Being’s) symbolic pregnancy is (what is meant by) going astray;

Not understanding (Being’s) insubstantiality is (what is meant by) experiencing happiness and sorrow;

Not understanding (Being’s) intrinsic calmness is (what is meant by) roaming about in samsara;

Not understanding non-eliminability and non-divisibility is (what is meant by) unknowing (i.e., spiritual unexcitedness and unexcitability) and darkness.

By not holding to one’s own (unique) “dwelling” one goes astray into the six realms of the living beings.

This is illustrated by the similes of a cairn, a rope, and a mirage

Mistaken to be a person, a snake, and water.

(All this) does not exist in Being-as-such, but is concocted and taken up by one’s dichotomic thinking.

(In Being-as-such) one has done with good and evil, with happiness and sorrow (and all this) has given way to infinity.

connectedness (*'brel-yod*), similar to the one that exists between a child and its mother. But if one cannot *feel* this intimacy of which Padmasambhava has spoken so often, it can at least be demonstrated by images that appeal to anyone with a modicum of intelligence. These images (similes) are a “sunbeam,” a “razor,” and a “string of glass beads.”<sup>165</sup>

The coming-to-presence of Being’s functionality occurs in full strength (*shugs-byung*) and, once it has manifested itself, it does not cease to be a presence (*'gags-med*). The three telling similes of this state of affairs are the fragrance of “sandalwood,” “musk,” and “garlic.”<sup>166</sup>

Padmasambhava now continues illustrating three important capacities that are the *sine qua non* for an individual’s intellectual-spiritual growth. These are a person’s discriminative-appreciative acumen (*shes-rab*), a person’s deeply felt understanding of Being (*rtogs*), and a person’s spiritual excitability and supraconscious ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*). The first of these capacities he illustrates by the images of a “dagger,” a “razor,” and a “drill.”<sup>167</sup>

This acumen is particularly important when someone is going to be instructed (*gdams-ngag*) or shown something, a situation so aptly illustrated by the images of a “child,” the “finger that points,” and the “moon.”<sup>168</sup>

The second capacity is illustrated by the images (similes) of the “first appearance of light in the sky before sunrise,” the “(opening of one’s) eyes,” and the brilliance of “the sun.”<sup>169</sup>

However, with the coming-to-presence of the whole’s functionality the chances of a malfunctioning, of the whole’s going astray into mistaken identifications (*'khrul-pa*), is always present. As far as the experiencer is concerned, this lack of a much needed critical

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*: *nyi-zer spu-gri shel-brgyus gsum*. In order to grasp the full import of these similes it is important to note that each Tibetan term is made up of two nouns. There is the “sun” (*nyi*) and its rays (*zer*)—wherever there is the sun there also are its rays and vice versa; there is the “hair that grows on one’s body” (*spu*) and the blade that shaves it (*gri*)—not any odd knife is able to do this job (as the manufacturers of shavers are quick to advertize); and there are the “glass beads” (*shel*) and the “yarn” (*brgyus*) that makes a string of them.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*: *tsan-dan gla-rtsi sgog-pa gsum*

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*: *ral-gri spu-gri so-gzong gsum*. Of these we have already met the *spu-gri* in the context of Being’s functionality and the universal connectedness that goes with it. Here the emphasis is on the sharpness of this instrument.

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*: *byis-pa mdzub-btsugs zla-ba*.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*: *nam-langs mig dang nyi-ma gsum*

acumen (*shes-rab*) and deeper understanding (*rtogs-pa*) manifests itself in his being shrouded in obscurations (*sgrib-g.yogs*). These obscurations and shrouds are the objectivistic models of reality of traditional belief systems together with their affective-emotional hold on the believer's mind.<sup>170</sup> The three images to illustrate this self-deception and self-delusion are a "cloud," "amaurosis," and "darkness."<sup>171</sup>

Once this darkness has taken over, the experiencer is bound to take a wrong turn and end up in a blind alley (*gol-sa*), each of which signifies one of the traditional three levels of "world" (carnal desires, aesthetic forms, and no-form). The three images to illustrate this predicament in which the experiencer finds himself, are "taking the wrong turn when going one's way" (that is, going south while intending to go north), a "bird's eyes" (that due to their location on the bird's head look in different directions, which on the part of the experiencer means that he goes right while intending to go left), and "intending to go forward while retracing one's steps."<sup>172</sup>

After this excursion into the pitfalls a person has created and continues creating for himself by his lack of critical acumen and deeper understanding of reality, Padmasambhava returns to the third *sine qua non* for a person's spiritual growth, his mental-spiritual excitability that is both the initiating force of the person's growth process and its climaxing in a supraconscious (non-egological) ecstatic intensity (*rig-pa*). The three similes to illustrate this thrust are a "thorn," a "pointed blade of a spear," and a "pointed arrow-head."<sup>173</sup>

We may ask ourselves, is life itself a creative process? If so, a person who wants to be really alive, must first have a vision (*lta-ba*), which in Buddhist thought significantly stands at the beginning of a person's long journey through life. Three images illustrate vi-

<sup>170</sup> For further details see also Herbert V. Guenther, *From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs-chen and the New Sciences of Mind*, p. 279 n. 29.

<sup>171</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2a: *sprin dang ling-tog mun-pa gsum*. There is a subtle gradation and movement from a binary mode, the external-"objective" (a "cloud") and the internal-"subjective" (the eye disease of "amaurosis") to a ternary, encompassing mode (spiritual "darkness").

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*: *lam-nor bya-mig 'gro-rjes gsum*

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*: *tsher-ma mdung-rtse mdel-rtse gsum*. The sequence of these images is not without interest. A thorn merely pricks, but otherwise does not go very deep; the thrust of the pointed blade of a spear goes, of course, much deeper, but it is the arrow-head, made of steel in Tibet and Mongolia, that thoroughly pierces its target.

sion as a process, leading to increased openness. They are a “vulture,” the “sky,” and the (mythical) “*khyung-chen*) bird.”<sup>174</sup>

But it is not enough to have a vision. The vision must be given form by active, participatory imagination (*sgom-pa*), which is illustrated by the three similes of a “mirror,” a “rainbow,” and a “shining lamp.”<sup>175</sup>

This giving form to the vision entails “shaping one’s life on the insights these images provide” (*spyod-pa*).<sup>176</sup> The three similes for it are a “bee,” an “elephant,” and a “madman.”<sup>177</sup>

But while in traditional Buddhist texts the crowning event in the above progression is referred to as a “goal” or “climax” (*bras-bu*), suggesting a static end state, Padmasambhava speaks instead of “circumspect action” (*phrin-las*), thus emphasizing the dynamic character of what, for want of a better term, we may call a person’s

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*: *bya-rgod nam-mkha’ khyung dang gsum*. Here, too, the sequence of the images is significant. The “vulture,” though a bird and not an earth-bound animal, is close to the earth where it tears its prey apart. The “sky” is above the earth and an image of unlimited openness; and the *khyung-chen*, though hovering in the air, “sees” the world holistically.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*: *me-long ‘ja’-tshon sgron-me gsum*. I have borrowed the term “active imagination” from C. G. Jung, in the sense of what he calls the second stage, which goes beyond simply observing the images. For this reason I have added “participatory.”

<sup>176</sup> Disregarding the meaning of its corresponding Sanskrit term *caryā* “going about one’s life by setting an example,” it is possible, though not feasible, to render this difficult term by the English word “behavior.” But here a word of caution is immediately necessary. First of all, behavior must not be confused with the mistaken notion developed by the school of “psychology” known as *behaviorism*. Because of its reductionism—reducing a human being to a mere response mechanism—it cannot account for the phenomenon of creativity, the hallmark of all life). Secondly, behavior (in this narrow sense) is predictable, which life is not. This unpredictability is underlined by the fact that there are twenty-one kinds of *spyod-pa*, of which seven are deemed to be more prominent varieties. See, for instance, Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa, *Theg-mchog mdzod* II, p. 150; *Tshig-don mdzod*, p. 315. By contrast, Padmasambhava presents only a modest three.

<sup>177</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2a: *bung-ba glang-chen smyon-pa gsum*. To a certain extent these similes and images are self-explanatory: a bee flies from one flower to another, never staying with one; an elephant that has happened to step into some swamp gets ever deeper into it, so beautifully expressed with reference to a person in the following stanza in his *bDud-rtsi bcud-thigs*, 2: 280b:

*ci byas mar-'gro'i gnas-su song*  
*glang-chen 'dam-du bying-pa 'dra*

Whatever (an ordinary person) may do, he cannot but go into situations pertaining to lower existences (and so)

Resembles an elephant that is sinking in a swamp.

The reference to a madman implies drunkenness, which already at the time of Padmasambhava seems to have been as rampant as it is still today in the hill regions of India.

“spiritual life.” It certainly is not some quietism as the three images for it make abundantly clear. They are a “lion,” a “flash of lightning,” and a “rock-slide.”<sup>178</sup>

All that has been said so far, merges in what is a person’s key disposition (*nyams*). This Tibetan term is extremely difficult to render in English (not because the English do not have what this term connotes, but because they simply have no word for it). In comparison the German word *Gemüt* precisely expresses, because of its double orientation, what the Tibetan word connotes: on the one side, it intimates the priority of the “being disposed to” over the affective-emotional acts in specific situations and, on the other side, it intimates the relationship of this being-disposed to the spiritual feelings a person experiences. The three images illustrating the *Gemüt* are a “little girl,” “bubbling water,” and the “heart’s overflowing (with rapture).”<sup>179</sup>

So far Padmasambhava has illustrated wholeness (*gzhi*) in its double connotation as “all-ground” (*kun-gzhi*, in its narrower sense our “ontic foundation”) and its dynamism, its lighting-up (*gzhi-srang*) in the whole’s functionality (*ritsal*) by impressive similes. He now goes on to what may be said to be a living person’s most salient feature (always bearing in mind that we as living persons are the whole and yet only part of it), “thinking’s thinking” (*sems-nyid*) that, if anything can be said about this most intimate aspect of ours, is sheer intensity, the matrix of all intensities, intensity. “equalling” the zero point energy of the vacuum in the jargon of modern physics.<sup>180</sup> Its outstanding dynamics is its coming-to-light, which is also its radiance (*srang-gsal*). The three images to illustrate this

<sup>178</sup> *ibid.*: *seng-ge thog dang rhab dang gsum*

<sup>179</sup> *ibid.*: *na-chung chu-bur snyi-rdol gsum*

<sup>180</sup> It is of utmost importance to note that *sems-nyid* is not the same as *sems*, which more or less corresponds to our notions of mind and/or mentation. The indigenous etymology of *sems*, in Sanskrit *citta*, is that “it builds up (*cinoti*) positive attitudes and is built up (*cita*) by such attitudes.” It is thus more or less a feedforward—feedbackward mechanism. All that which we associate with “thinking” is performed by “mind-related operants” (*sems-'byung*, Sanskrit *caitta*). For details see Herbert V. Guenther, *From Reductionism to Creativity*, p. 24. The zero-point energy of the vacuum is technically known as *stong-(pa)-nyid* (in Sanskrit *sūnyatā*), which has nothing to do with the “emptiness” of the emptiness-fetishists who confuse their private state of mind with and raise it to a metaphysical absolute.

brilliance (with its implied wondrousness) are the “statues in temple,” the “butter flame in a jug,” and the “reflection in a mirror.”<sup>181</sup>

However, thinking’s thinking may not always be bright. Three images illustrate its lack of brightness and radiance (*mi-gsal*). They are a “tiger skin,” a “leopard skin,” and the “eyes in a peacock’s tail.”<sup>182</sup>

Though not meant as “definitions” which are the downfall of reductionist thinking, Padmasambhava now points out some attributes of thinking’s thinking by way of images that are meant to stimulate one’s imagination. There is first of all the unitary character of thinking’s thinking, the non-duality of the external and the internal (*phyi-nang gnyis-med*). Its three similes are a “crystal,” “arsenic powder,” and “water.”<sup>183</sup>

Another way of speaking of the unitary character of thinking’s thinking is to refer to its invariance (*gyur-ba med-pa*), illustrated by the three images of “black coals,” “black wool,” and “black silk.”<sup>184</sup>

Lest the listener may conceive of these attributes as static qualities, Padmasambhava is quick to point out that thinking’s thinking is dynamic, which means that these qualities are more like what Alfred North Whitehead has called “vector feeling-tones.” Thus, we may feel and “take to heart” (*nyams-len*) what is going on deep within ourselves. The three images to illustrate this with the added implication that what happens may become denser and denser and ever more opaque, are a “breeze,” a “cloud,” and “fog.”<sup>185</sup>

Still, in spite of these danger signals the “fine structure” of thinking’s thinking is non-dichotomic, there is no subject-object structure in an ultimate sense (*gzung-’dzin med-pa*), and the three images to illustrate this are (the mind’s) “not becoming attached (to anything),” “not craving (for anything),” and “not doing something (with what one becomes attached to and craves for).”<sup>186</sup>

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*: *lha-khang nang-gi lha-tshogs dang/ bum-pa nang-gi mar-me dang/ me-long nang-gi gzugs-brnyan gsum*

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, 219/2b: *stag-lpags gzig-lpags rma-bya’i mdongs*. These similes are a veiled critique of the symbols in which the major three pollutants-emotions (*’dod-chags, zhe-sdang, gti-mug*, in Sanskrit *rāga, dveṣa, moha*) are visualized in the “transformative stage” of the visualization exercise (*bskyed-rim*).

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*: *shel-sgong gzi-mying chu dang gsum*

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*: *sol-nag bal-nag dar-nag gsum*

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*: *rlung dang sprin dang smug-pa gsum*

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*: *ma-chags ma-zhen byar-med dang*. The term *byar-med* is particularly important. On the one hand, it states unambiguously that there is “nothing” (*med*) to do (*bya*) that then may be mistaken as something permanent; on the other hand, it points to the

Should we succeed in breaking the hold of our ego-logical and ego-centric mode of thinking and seeing which impoverishes us in every respect, and should we begin thinking and seeing *aletheically*,<sup>187</sup> impermanence (*mi-rtag-pa*) is no threat to our self, nor a source of despair. Rather, this seeing *aletheically* lets things shimmer and glow and move us aesthetically in its original meaning of being more perceptive. The three images for this experience are “flowers,” “crops,” and “dew drops on grass.”<sup>188</sup>

A recurring theme is the indivisibility (*dbyer-med*) of experience as an *Erleben* (*Erlebnis*) that, the moment we want to express it in words, turns into an *Erfahren* (*Erfahrung*) that can be reported. Broadly speaking, indivisibility refers to the paradox of there being a presence or, more exactly, a presencing, a lighting-up (*snang-ba*), not in the sense of this presence being a presence of possibilities, but in the sense of this presence *being* the possibilities themselves, a “what” that is nothing (*stong-pa*). Indivisibility is not the same as synthesis (*zung-'jug*) with which it is often confused. Indivisibility is an “ontological” concept, synthesis is a “theoretical” construct.<sup>189</sup> The three images to bridge the gap between the “what” and the “nothing” and to illustrate indivisibility are a “mixture of water and mud,” “waves subsiding in the water (from which they have risen),” and the “evanescence of a rainbow in the sky.”<sup>190</sup>

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utter transcendence (*blo-'das*) of thinking's thinking. In other words, thinking's thinking in its dynamics may be stated to be “active” in the sense of being creative, but this is not the same as busybodying (“doing something”).

<sup>187</sup> I have borrowed this term from David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, p. 463.

<sup>188</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2b: *me-tog lo-tog rtsva-yi zil*.

<sup>189</sup> This “what” and “nothing” is pervasive of (any) art work. Arturo B. Fallico, *Art and Existentialism*, p. 22, succinctly states:

The art object is nothing but the present-felt-image, the realized possibility in all its uniqueness and individuality

and

The what of it is attested to by the fact that it is a presence; the nothingness, by the fact that it is not a presence of any thing. The unreality of the art-object is established on three counts: it is not a spatio-temporal of our ordinary perceiving awareness; it is not any representation of such; and it is not something subsumed under any concept or system of concepts.

Modern physics would concur. Roger S. Jones, *Physics for the Rest of Us*, pp. 325–326, even goes so far as to speak of physics itself as art.

<sup>190</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2b: *chu dang rnyog-ma 'dres-pa dang/ chu-la chu-rlabs thim-pa dang/ 'ja'-tshon mkha'-la thim-pa gsum*

While indivisibility may still have something “static” about it, even if the similes for it belie any such assumption, its counterpart, “irreversibility” (*phyir mi-ldog-pa*) is thoroughly dynamic. The three images for it are a “spell that has been put on poison,” “the water in an irrigation channel that runs into a lake,” and “salt that dissolves in water.”<sup>191</sup>

An indispensable requisite for a person’s growth into a spiritually developed Self, rather than one’s persisting in the socially adaptive roles of a self, is “one’s being true to one’s self” (*dam-tshig*).<sup>192</sup> The

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.*: *dug-la sngags-kyis thebs-pa dang/ yur-chus rgya-mtshor slebs-pa dang/ lan-tshva chu-la thim-pa gsum*

<sup>192</sup> Padmasambhava’s own hermeneutical interpretation of this term as meaning “not to transgress,” “not to pass beyond” (*mi-'da'-ba*), is found in his *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 129b:

*ka-dag skye-med don rtogs-na*  
*de-las mi-'da' dam-tshig yin*  
*ming-med brjod-'das don rtogs-na*  
*de-las mi-'da' dam-tshig yin*  
*dnegos-med zang-thal don rtogs-na*  
*de-las mi-'da' dam-tshig yin*  
*byar-med blo-'das don rtogs-na*  
*de-las mi-'da' dam-tshig yin*  
*yang-ti'i nyi-zla don rtogs-na*  
*'og-mar mi-spyod dam-tshig yin*  
*dam-tshig dam-tshig zhes-bya-ba*  
*skye-med ka-dag dam-tshig yin*  
*dper-na chu dang shel-sgong 'dra*

If one understands what (wholeness in its) symbolic pregnancy and no-birth mean (and)

Does not pass beyond it, (this is what is meant by) being true to one’s self;

If one understands what no-name and beyond-words mean (and)

Does not pass beyond it, (this is what is meant by) being true to one’s self;

If one understands what insubstantiality and dissipativeness mean (and)

Does not pass beyond it, (this is what is meant by) being true to one’s self.

If one understands what non-construability and transcendence mean (and)

Does not pass beyond it, (this is what is meant by) being true to one’s self.

If one understands what (my) *Yang-ti*’s sun and moon mean (and)

Does not engage in the lower spiritual pursuits, (this is what is meant by) being true to one’s self.

One speaks of being true to one’s self as being true to one’s self (which means the whole’s)

No-birth and symbolic pregnancy (as) one’s being true to one’s self.

(What is implied is that being true to one’s self) resembles (clear) water and a (transparent) crystal.

The terms *ka-dag skye-med* (or *skye-med ka-dag*), *ming-med brjod-med*, *dnegos-med zang-thal*, and *byar-med blo-'das* in the above quotation, form each a compound in which the first term is ontology-oriented and the second term is of the nature of a vector feeling-tone. Connecting the two terms by the word “and” (as I have done due to

three images for it are a "lotus flower," a "peacock," and "poison."<sup>193</sup>

By this being-true-to-one's self, by being a spiritually developed Self, one's "knowing" takes on a different character from ordinary fragmenting knowing, knowing *things* by bits and pieces, but not in their wholeness and radiance. Padmasambhava describes this *originary awaring* (*ye-shes*) by the following three images: the "moon," "lambent light," and the "morning star."<sup>194</sup>

Padmasambhava concludes his disquisition with three interrelated topics. The first is life's continuity or "uninterruptedness" (*rgyun-chad med-pa*), illustrated by the three images of "one generation of human beings following another one," the "flow of a river," and the "transmission of textual traditions."<sup>195</sup>

Continuity does not preclude phase transitions (*bar-do*) that introduce a directedness, a vector which already indicates in which direction life's stream will move. Although here the "law of large numbers" which states that an adequate description of a heterogeneous system is possible by means of average values, is inapplicable, there are indications of what is going to happen. The confirmation is illustrated by three images: a "flash of lightning," a "shooting star," and an "arrow shot."<sup>196</sup>

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the English language structure) is slightly misleading. Our categories of nouns and qualifiers (adjectives) simply do not apply to Padmasambhava's way of thinking and the Tibetan language.

Over time a vast literature has developed on this requisite. Outstanding in this vast corpus are the writings by Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa. The Tibetan language is very precise in distinguishing between a spiritually developed Self, referred to as *bdag-nyid chen-po*, and the ego-logical self, spoken of in terms of an "I" and a "self" (*nga-bdag*).

<sup>193</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor*, 2: 219/2b: *padma rma-bya dug dang gsum*. The intent of these similes is that a person who is true to himself (herself) is like a lotus flower, unsoiled by the muddy water in which it grows; a person who wavers in his commitment of being true to himself, is like a peacock. A peacock eats poisonous snakes, which is to intimate that a person has within himself the capacity to nullify the chances of not being true to himself. Lastly, not being true to one's self is like poison, destructive and deadening.

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*: *zla-ba 'od dang skar-chen gsum*. The beauty of these similes lies in the implied contrast between (1) the moon's gentle light and the brilliant glare of the sun and (2) the refreshing coolness of the night and the scorching heat of the day, which only a person living in the tropics and desert regions can appreciate. So also 'od contrasts with 'od-gsal—a "proto-light" and its "brilliance" as actual light. Lastly the morning star is an "archetypal" image that has inspired poets all over the world.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*: *mi-rgyud chu-rgyud gzhung-rgyud gsum*

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*: *glog dang skar-mda' mda'-phangs gsum*

Lastly, the three similes for the “goal” (*'bras-bu*) make it abundantly clear that it is a “felt” value. They are “gold,” a “mountain,” and a “precious gem.”<sup>197</sup>

This lengthy presentation of a plethora of similes and/or images by Padmasambhava is unique on at least two counts. Not only is there a detectable internal logic in the presentation of the process of becoming human in what is basically an anthropocosmic context, but also in each of its phases illustrated by a triplet of similes there is a recognizable internal logic, proceeding from the concrete to the subtle. But what will strike the reader most—at least, it did so for me—is the fact that the images are suffused with an often supernatural light and never lose sight of the human element in them. They are meant to be contemplated as incentives to active, participatory imagination without which we would no longer be humans.

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<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*: *gser dang ri-bo rin-chen gsum*

## EPILOGUE

I began this book by asking who Padmasambhava was, only to find that no definitive answer was possible. Still, certain salient features emerged. He was hated by the Tibetan nobility who would have liked to do away with this “foreigner” who by his very looks already proved himself to be neither a Tibetan nor an Indian, as is also evident from Tibetan scroll paintings and bronze statues. He was, however, more or less highly regarded by the king Khri-srong lde’u-btsan himself, partly because the latter needed moral support for his Buddhist leanings and partly because Padmasambhava carried with him the nimbus of coming directly from the land of the “magicians”—Urgyan. Lastly, he seems to have captured the imagination of a large section of the populace by his flamboyant appearances in public and, above all, by his magical feats of “subduing countless demons” who made life miserable for all living in Tibet and its adjacent regions.

The available biographies by Tibetan authors, primarily meant to be inspirational rather than investigatory, are of little, if any, historical value, specifically if we attempt to apply our standards of historiography and biography to them. On the other hand, they have a certain charm when read as works of fiction. One of the most famous among such literary fictions is the *Padma bka'-thang*, ascribed to no less a person than Padmasambhava's lifelong consort, mKhar-chen bza' Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, the adolescent ex-wife of king Khri-srong lde'u-btsan. This work, written in verse form, is said to have been “re-discovered,” that is, in all likelihood, composed and edited by Urgyan gling-pa in 1346 C.E.—some six hundred years after Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet. Not only does this work presuppose the author's knowledge of Indian poetics—it revolves around one of Daṇḍin's (*circa* 665 to 710 or 720 C.E.) figures of speech, the *vyājastuti* “praise by censure,”—but also shows the author's knowledge of Brahmanical legends and folkloristic themes. It is in this work that (1) Padmasambhava is made out to have been a serial killer in his youth—but the manner in which he performed his last act of violence looks more like a sort of mis-

placed concreteness of a sensuously experienced psychic reality, the bodily felt exuberance and primordial ecstasy of Being that, significantly, was given the name of Heruka-śrī,<sup>1</sup> that (2) Padmasambhava is said to have the beautiful 'Od-'chang-ma snatched from her fiancé in order to make her his wife—obviously the Buddhist version of the Rukmiṇī-Kṛṣṇa episode in the *Mahābhārata*,<sup>2</sup> and, lastly, that

<sup>1</sup> Other names are *Che-mchog Heruka*, *dpal-gyi dpal-mchog Heruka*, and *dpal-chen Heruka*. He figures prominently in the works of Padmasambhava, "translated" and edited by his Tibetan disciple Vairocana. Thus, in the *dpal Khrag-'thung 'dus-pa rtsa-ba'i rgyud* (15: 2b) the following hermeneutical interpretation of the name Heruka is given:

*shin-tu khro-zhing gtum-pa-la*  
*zhi-bas phan-par mi-'gyur te*  
*khro-bo de-bzhin-gshegs kun mdzad*  
*sangs-rgyas thugs-rje khros-pas ni*  
*gdug-pa ma-lus 'dul-bar byed*  
*thams-cad dbang-du gyur-nas kyang*  
*bsgo-ba'i bka' nyan bran bzhin gnas*  
*he ni dgyes-shing bzhad-pa'i gsung*  
*ru ni kun-la chags-pa'i thugs*  
*ka ni mnyam-nyid ye-shegs sku*  
*śrī ni snying-rje bdag-gzhan rtogs*  
*ma-skyes dbyings ni shes-rab ste*  
*ma-'gags sprul-pa de-yi thabs*  
*dus-gsum dngos-po thams-cad kun*  
*mnyam-nyid gnas-pa sbyor-ba yin*

People who are very angry and cruel

Are not benefitted by meekness (and therefore)

All those who are spiritually advanced resort to violence.

Through the fierce concern for others the spiritually awake ones display

All wicked persons are subdued.

Once they have been brought under control

They will, like servants, continue listening to the words of their superiors.

*he* means (a Buddha's) gladdening and laughing Words;

*ru* means (a Buddha's) all-loving Thoughts;

*ka* means (a Buddha's) Body (as His) consistency originary awareness;

*śrī* means (a Buddha's) compassion that understands me and others.

(His) dimensionality that is unborn is (the dimensionality of His) appreciation;

(His) dimensionality that is unending (and) issues from (dimensionality of His appreciation) is (the dimensionality of His) effectiveness.

The continuance of all that exists through the three aspects of time

In its consistency with itself and everything else is (what is meant by) the *conjunctio* (of appreciation and effectiveness).

<sup>2</sup> The mechanical reconstruction of the Tibetan 'Od-'chang-ma into the Sanskrit Bhāsadharā by the French translator of this text, Gustave-Charles Toussaint (1912), apparently inspired by a Tibetan who knew just as little Sanskrit as the French translator, is, like all such "reconstructions" or, more precisely, "concoctions" too silly as to deserve serious discussion.

(3) Padmasambhava is said to have callously left behind his beautiful and young wife heartbroken—obviously a reminiscence of the historical Buddha's leaving his wife and newly born son and an attempted validation of the fact that, in course of time Padmasambhava had become known as the "second" Buddha (*sangs-rgyas gnyis-pa*).

While the details of Padmasambhava's historical existence remain as mysterious as ever, his ideas as laid down in his own writings stand out vividly in utmost clarity. In these works he emerges as a visionary thinker who has little patience with the stolid and dull disquisitions of the reductionist thinkers and the fastidious but tedious ritualists. He knows their tenets and practices and dismisses them as instances of imperfect movements and imperfect fixations. As a visionary thinker of the highest order he is one who knows and speaks from experience and, for this reason alone, he is a striking example of individuality. He boldly speaks of the vision he has had, in the first person—"in this my unsurpassable *spyi-ti* and/or *yang-ti* experience"—and the thinking that sustains this experience is an intuitive thinking (*anschauliches Denken*), not a representational thinking (*vorstellendes Denken*). But not only is his thinking intuitive, it also is an interpretative (hermeneutical) thinking (*verstehendes Denken*). Its theme is the problem of *Man/human* in playing the dual role of being simultaneously the universe itself and the individual in his becoming *Man/human*, in particular. To the extent that *Man/human* stands at the center of his vision and interest, Padmasambhava's way of thinking evinces similarities with Gnostic trends wide-spread in the region from which he came,<sup>3</sup> but differs from them in crucial aspects. *Man/human* is not created by a god or demiurge, but evolves out of the potential that he/she/it is and that in its dynamics expresses itself in symbols of its own making, "epiphanies of (its) mystery" (*brda'*), that are understood in the immediacy of their experiencing them prior to the shaping of them into distinct patterns of meaning and/or images (*dpe*) by the omnipresent experiencer's consciousness. In either case, be this the pre-egological *Erlebnis* or the ego-logical *Erfahrung*, the organizing principle is the number Three. This means that the whole as a unitrinity always and already acts as one, for Three is the numerical basis of process

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<sup>3</sup> See Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 87, quoting Gilles Quispel, *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, p. 29.

thinking that does not admit of any absolutes. Instead, it moves and manifests itself in a series of symmetry breaks that assume the character of complementarities, which, because they are complementarities, exclude the dominance of any one pole over the other.

Not only is the whole's becoming *Man/human* experienced as being based on the number Three (maybe for no other reason than that we already come across this number directly in our genetic code),<sup>4</sup> but also this ominous number plays an enormous role in the living world from which the examples, the images illustrating this process of becoming *Man/human*, are taken.

Images, whether we label them symbols, metaphors, similes and so on, are the shapes in which the whole's energy as the meaning-that-we-are expresses itself and becomes the expressed. They are the thing or things that seem to exist while really they do not exist, and we then use them to probe and to understand the unexpressed or non-existent. As Padmasambhava already noted:<sup>5</sup>

(The whole's) energy (as) the Dasein of our existential reality<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In this context it may not be out of place to quote the words of Erich Jantsch, *The Self-organizing Universe*, p. 310:

In a process-oriented view, the evolution of specific structures is not predetermined. But then are functions—processes which may realize themselves in a multitude of structures—predetermined? In other words, does the evolution of mind follow a predetermined pattern? Or does such an assumption again lead to a wrong conclusion already prefigured in process thinking, just as the predetermination of structures has been prefigured by mechanistic, structure-oriented thinking? Is the formula of Eastern mysticism that the universe is made to become self-reflexive, only the expression of an inherent limitation of Eastern process philosophy?

Perhaps it is not that important to find answers to these questions at all. Our search is ultimately devoted not to a precise knowledge of the universe, but to a grasp of the role which we play in it—to the meaning of our life.

<sup>5</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor* (2: 219/2a):

*snying-po don-gyi gnas-lugs de  
mtshon-pa'i yul-du ma-gyur kyang  
re-zhig dpe-yi sgo-nas mtshon*

<sup>6</sup> This difficult phrase with its emphasis on the *don* having the double meaning of "reality-as-such" and "the reality-that-we-are," is explicated by Padmasambhava in his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po* (3: 43b) as involving the "triad" of what is (1) the fore-structure of our humanity (*chos-sku*) that in its depth and vastness has never existed as some thing, of what is (2) (this fore-structure's) disposition to become alight (*ngang-dangs*), self-originated and ever shining, and of what is (3) (this fore-structure's) self-luminous and symbolic (image of us as the) Little Man of Light (*khye'u-chung*) inseparable from and within a mansion of light that is the whole's dimensionality in which meanings are born, shining in their coming-to-presence—

*ye-med gting-yangs chos-sku dang*

Is not some object that can be pointed out (as “this is it”),  
Yet it may be pointed out by way of similes/illustrative instances.

The implication of this statement is that we play a game of imaging the non-existent, the No, as something existent and then attempt to explain the actually non-existent by an imaged existent that also is actually non-existent. In this insistence on non-existence Padma-sambhava is as radical as his gnostic counterpart Basilides.<sup>7</sup>

Seeing ourselves as energy (*snying-po*) that according to Padma-sambhava’s own words remains invariant (*'gyur-(ba) med*) and is not something (some manipulatable thing) that is born (*skye-(ba) med*), introduces a felt sense of permanence, stability, and immutable constancy in us as experiencers of this energy. But this deeply felt sense is constantly upset by our experiencing ourselves as being an unceasing and unending (*'gag-(pa) med*) process of giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*). In Padmasambhava’s

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*ye-gdangs rang-byung ngang-dangs dang*  
*rang-gsal dag-pa'i khye'u-chung-rnams*  
*snang-gsal chos-dbyings 'od-khang-du*  
*'du-'bral med-pa'i ngo-sprod te*

The primordial (time-before-time) No (in its) depth and vastness (acts as) the fore-structure of our humanity;

The primordial (time-before-time) effulgence (in its) self-originatedness (acts as) (the whole’s, the No’s) disposition to become alight;

The auto-brilliance and (its) symbolic pregnancy (as) the Little Man of Light—

Are encountered as (constituting our existential reality as an experience that in its unity is such) nothing can be added to nor subtracted from it,

In a mansion of light (that is the whole’s) field-like dimensionality (in which) meanings (are born), the phenomenal (in its) brilliance.

In the work, just quoted, on fols. 20b–21a, Padmasambhava uses the term *chos-nyid* in place of *snying-po*. Taking our cue from the *chos-sku* in the first line of this stanza, we can get a further insight in Padmasambhava’s process-oriented (evolutionary) thinking. Our individuality in its “budding” state of the Little Man of Light (*khye'u-chung*) is the proto- or fore-structure of our spirituality manifested in what is sensuously perceived and intuited as the *sprul-sku*, pointing to a wider and higher dimensionality, referred to as (the whole’s) disposition to become alight (*ngang-dangs*), otherwise known also as the *longs-sku*, having its *raison d’être* in the *chos-sku*. Any *sku* is a structural event in which a figure differentiates itself from its environing “field,” in the narrower sense the “mansion of light” (*'od-khang*), in the wider sense of the word, “the dimensionality of Being where thoughts/meanings are born” (*chos-dbyings*), in the above quoted stanza in which the emphasis is on the light that is Being.

<sup>7</sup> On Padmasambhava’s radicalness see his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po* (3: 30b–31a), his *sNang-gsal spu-gri* (2: 288b–289a) in which he speaks of the copulative “is not” (*min*) and negative “exists not” (*med*), and his *sPros-bral don-gsal* (1: 4b). For Padma-sambhava as for Basilides the non-existent, the No, is not a correlate to some existent as in Indian and Aristotelian logic.

words, we are not only a presentation (not re-presentation) or presence of an immutable energy (*snying-po* = *don*), but we are also the presence of a process giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid* = *don*):<sup>8</sup>

(The whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (as) the Dasein of our existential reality

Involves four similarities and (hence) is pointed out by four similes/illustrative instances:

- (1) Since it has no materiality it is nonobjectifiable;
- (2) Since it has no birth and lies beyond the scope of representational thought it is invariant;
- (3) Since (its) nonobjectifiability is beyond the scope of (any) demonstrability it is the meaning-structure (that we are); and
- (4) Since it is nondemonstrable it lies beyond the scope of similes/illustrative instances.

Sometimes one uses similes/illustrative instances to (facilitate) an intellectual understanding,

But the "stuff" (that our) reality (is made of) lies beyond the scope of (spoken) words.

Whether the central theme in Padmasambhava's thinking, the being and/or becoming *Man/human*, is viewed in relation to the whole's energy (*snying-po*) or in relation to the whole's giving birth to thoughts/meanings (*chos-nyid*), it is an unfolding process. This unfolding that, in a sense, takes place *within* us as its experiencers who, by implication, are this very process, passes through three phases that remain interconnected. It starts from Being's undivided and indivisible wholeness, numerically expressed as the One (*thig-le nyag-gcig*),<sup>9</sup> as with Padmasambhava himself and in Neoplatonism,

<sup>8</sup> *sNang-srid kha-sbyor* (2: 219/2b):

*chos-nyid don-gyi gnas-lugs-la*  
*'dra bzhi yod-pas dpe bzhis mtshon*  
*dnagos-gzhi med-pas dmigs-su med*  
*skye-med bsam-'das 'gyur-med yin*  
*dmigs-med bsam-'das chos-sku yin*  
*mtshon-du med-pas dpe-las 'das*  
*re-zhig mtshon-nas go phyir bstan*  
*don-gyi ngo-bo brjod-las 'das*

<sup>9</sup> On the meaning of this term see Herbert V. Guenther, *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained*, pp. 2 and 3. On its use with *snying-po* see Padmasambhava's *sPros-pa gcod-pa sde-lnga*, 2: 272a:

*snying-po thig-le nyag-gcig-la*

Concerning the whole's energy, (this) uniquely autopoietic dynamics,

or as the zero-point or No (*med*), as with Basilides and Padma-sambhava, and then presences, by way of its inherent dynamics, as a polarized dimensionality, numerically expressed as a Two (... and ...). Here socio-sexual imagery begins to play its part. There is the archetypal Father (*yab*) and the archetypal Mother (*yum*), existing *side by side* like the ungenerated (*agennetos*) Forefather and the Ennoia (Thought) who may be bound to each other but the latter is not subordinate to the former, as in Valentinian gnosis.<sup>10</sup> In modern terms this “side by side” or the “... and ...” constitutes the principle of complementarity that is so characteristic of Padma-sambhava’s thinking. Apart from its socio-sexual imagery this principle is primarily understood by Padmasambhava as being of ontological and psychological significance that for us, as embodied gender-specific beings, assumes male-female determinations. There is what Padmasambhava calls “thinking’s thinking” (*sems-nyid*). It relates to the “effectiveness principle” (*thabs*), experienced as Being’s exuberance and visualized as the male Heruka. Then there is what Padmasambhava calls the “giving birth to thoughts/meanings” (*chos-nyid*). It relates to the “appreciation principle” (*shes-rab*), experienced as the innermost core of our mental/spiritual creativity, accounting for the multiplicity of our experienceable and experienced world, and visualized as the “Eternal Feminine” (*das Ewig-Weibliche*), in the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.<sup>11</sup> The dualism or, more precisely, the principle of complementarity evoked here is itself an unfolding of an innate tension in what is called Being (*gzhi*) that, from a dynamic perspective of it, is called Being’s coming-to-presence (*gzhi-snang*), and, pointing back to a triune dynamic One it resolves into a “new” triune One, experienced as the “Only Son” (*sras-gcig*) of the two anthropocosmic principles and visualized as the “Little Man of Light” (*khnye’u-chung*). In a profound statement Padmasambhava explicates the intimate relation-

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and in its use with *stong-pa-nyid* see Padmasambhava/Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal’s *Kun-tu bzang-mo klong-gsal ’bar-ma nyi-ma’i gsang-rgyud*, 25: 372a:

*stong-pa-nyid-kyi snying-po ni*  
*thig-le nyag-gcig sku-ru rdzogs*

The energy of the vacuum’s zero-point energy is  
 (The whole’s) uniquely autopoietic dynamics, completely (present) as (the whole’s)  
 gestaltism.

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> *Faust*, part ii, “Mountain Gorges,” vs. 12110.

ship between thinking's thinking and the giving birth to thoughts/meanings, underlying the process of becoming *Man/human* following a sexual pattern of development:<sup>12</sup>

When thinking's thinking, all-cognitive, all-excitabile, and flawless,  
Like the radiant and open sky, has settled in  
The visible brilliance of (its) originary awareness, self-originated from  
its very beginning,  
This is (what is meant by Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings.

In the pleromatic-imaginal realm of which Padmasambhava speaks and which itself speaks through Padmasambhava, there cannot be any rigid and pre-existent boundaries that are set up when the experiencer reflects on this world and breaks the original unity. Being pure process, it even has its own language, as Padmasambhava with his profound insight has noted. He calls it the "language of the *spyi-ti* experience" (*spyi-ti bshad-lugs*) and briefly sums it up in the following words:<sup>13</sup>

It will not originate from other spiritual pursuits:  
It is not (something that) has originated, it is not (something that) originates (now), and it is not (something that) will originate (in some future).

More specifically this "language" distributes over the fore-structures of our existentiality, as Padmasambhava explicitly states:<sup>14</sup>

The language of the *spyi-ti* experience is such that  
The *chos-sku* speaks of (the whole's) not-being-born (as some thing);  
The *longs-sku* speaks of (the whole's) not-ever-ceasing (as does some thing); and

<sup>12</sup> rDzogs-chen chig-chod kun-grol (25: 389a):

*sems-nyid kun-shes kun-rig dri-med 'di  
gsal-stong nam-mkha' lta-bur gdod-ma-nas  
rang-byung ye-shes mngon-sum gsal-ba-ru  
gdan-la phebs-na de-ka chos-nyid yin*

<sup>13</sup> sNang-srid kha-sbyor, 2: 205a:

*theg-pa gzhan-las 'byung mi-'gyur  
ma-byung mi-'byung 'byung mi-'gyur*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*:

*spyi-ti bshad-lugs ni  
skye-med chos-sku'i bshad-lugs dang  
'gag-med longs-sku'i bshad-lugs dang  
thugs-rje sprul-sku'i bshad-lugs-so*

The *sprul-sku* speaks of (the whole's) spiritual concern (for all-that-is), and then elaborates in the following words:<sup>15</sup>

No-birth (as) the language of the *chos-sku*

Explicitly states that all the meanings (that make up our experienced world) pertain to the (whole's) dimensionality of its no-birth;

Invariance [as the language of the *chos-sku*] demonstrates the "stuff" the *chos-sku* is made of—

Once you have drowned (no-birth and invariance) in the vortex of ineffability, leave (them) there.

The language of the *longs-sku*

Demonstrates the ceaseless (presence) of all the meanings (that make up our experienced world)—

Spreading far and wide and (never) ceasing (to be a presence) is (what is meant by) *longs-sku*.

The language of the *sprul-sku* (that speaks of the whole's) spiritual concern (for all that is) means that

The non-duality of (our) phenomenal and interpreted world is the *sprul-sku*—

Although it lights up in a multiplicity (of images) none of them can be grasped (ego-logically),

Non-attachment to and non-desire for what lights up "objectively" and Non-"subjective"—organismic-thinking is (what is meant by) the language of the *sprul-sku*.

In this triune realm images and their symbols intermingle freely and almost inseparably.<sup>16</sup> This is particularly evident from Padma-

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* 205b–206a:

*skye-med chos-sku'i [instead of the printed don-gyi] bshad-lugs ni*  
*chos-rnams skye-med dbying-su bshad*  
*'gyur-med chos-sku'i ngo-bor bstan*  
*brjod-med klong-du bstims-[206a] nas bzhag*  
*longs-spyod-rdzogs-sku'i bshad-lugs ni*  
*chos-rnams 'gag-pa-med-par bstan*  
*brdal-khyab 'gag-med longs-sku'o*  
*thugs-rje'i sprul-sku'i bshad-lugs ni*  
*snang-srid gnyis-med sprul-pa'i sku*  
*sna-tshogs snang-la ngos-zung med*  
*snang-ba yul-la chags-zhen med*  
*dran-med sprul-sku'i bshad-lugs-so*

<sup>16</sup> This is clearly brought out in the *Nam-mkha' 'bar-ba* (1: 89b–100b), a work by a certain Śrī-Ratnavajra and his Tibetan (translator-editor) dPal-Heruka summing up Padmasambhava's ideas. There, on fol. 94b, we read:

*de-nas rang-byung ngang-dangs-kyis*  
*ming-med ston-pa kun-grol-la*  
*snying-po chos-nyid chos-sku gsum-la khyad-par yod-dam med*  
*zhus-pas*  
*ston-pas 'khor-la bka'-stsal-pa*

sambhava's use of the term *klong*, signifying a vortex that in its swirling visibly expresses the dynamics that is inherent in all that becomes sensuously experienced. As a matter of fact it can be stated unambiguously that this image or idea of a vortex is the leitmotiv of his visionary and interpretive (hermeneutical) thinking. A few examples may illustrate this point.

When I speak of the vortex of invariance, (I have in mind Being's dimensionality of its) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, (this dimensionality) having neither a surface nor a bottom line.<sup>17</sup>

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*de gsum gzhi-la khyad-par med*  
*yan-lag rtsal dang ming-'dogs-la*  
*ming-gi bye-brag khyad-par yod*  
*snying-po chos-nyid dbyings-la khyad-par med*  
*ces gsungs-so*

Then the self-originated disposition to become alight asked  
 The teacher "He who has no name (and) holistically dissolves (into the nothingness-that-is-Being):"

Is there or is there not a difference between (Being's) energy, (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, and (Being's) meaning-structure (as the forestructure of our humanity)?

In Being-(*qua*)-Being there is no difference between these three;

In (Being's) functionality (resulting in Being's) branchings and in the applying of names (to it)

There is a difference in names, but there is

No difference between (Being's) energy, (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, and (Being's) field-character (into which this giving birth to thoughts/meanings develops).

The two authors of the *Nam-mkha'* 'bar-ba continue explicating the triune character of the three key notions *dbyings*, *ye-shes*, and *skye-med* to the effect that

*dbyings ni chos-nyid 'dus-ma-byas*  
*skye-med snying-po chos-kyi sku*  
*ye-shes ye-shes zhes-bya-ba*  
*ye-nas yod-pa'i shes-pa yin*  
*gsal 'grib-med-pa'i shes-pa yin*

*dbyings* (Being's field-character or dimensionality where meanings are born) is (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, a non-composite (dimensionality); *skye-med* (the no-birth) is (Being's) energy (as its) meaning-structure (experienced by us as our)

*ye-shes* (originary awareness, *ursprüngliches Wissen* or *Urwissen*) which is so called because

It is (the whole's) cognitive capacity that has existed since time before time—

A cognitive capacity that is radiant and unobscured.

In the same work, on fol. 94a, the two authors explicitly state that thinking's thinking (*sems-nyid*) is the fore-structure of our humanity (*chos-sku*).

<sup>17</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 8b:

'gyur-med-kyi klong zer-na/ chos-nyid-la kha-gting med-pa'o.

Elsewhere he speaks of a vortex in connection with Being's energy (*snying-po klong* or *snying-po'i klong*):<sup>18</sup>

In this unsurpassable leap experience, absolutely complete,  
 There dwells in (its) enormously deep and vast mandala<sup>19</sup> that is  
 (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings  
 The self-originated assemblage of divine figures of sheer brilliance.  
 When the living beings in samsara, the phenomenal and interpreted  
 world with its fully determinate this and that,

Similarly, he begins his *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 19a, with the words:

*chos-nyid kha-gting-med-pa'i klong-na*  
*rang-byung mu-mtha'-grol-ba'i ston-pas rang-snang 'od-kyi 'khor-la gsal-dag*  
*rang-grol-gyi bstan-pa bshad*

In the vortex of (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, having neither a surface nor bottom line, the teacher "Self-originated and free from the limits of the categories set by rational thought" explicated to his entourage of a self-manifesting luminosity the teaching of (Being's) brilliance and symbolic transparency and self-dissipativeness.

<sup>18</sup> *Nyi-zla'i snying-po*, 3: 37a:

*yongs-rdzogs thod-rgal bla-med 'dir*  
*chos-nyid gting-mtha' yangs-pa'i dkyil-'khor-na*  
*rang-byung 'od-gsal chen-po'i lha-tshogs bzhugs*  
*chos-can snang-srid 'khor-ba'i sems-can-la*  
*rig-pa mu-mtha'-yongs-grol dbang-bskur-bas*  
*dnegos-grub 'bras-bu snying-po chos-sku 'thob*  
*theg-pa 'og-ma'i dkyil-'khor ma-zhugs shing*  
*bya-btsal zhe-'dod dbang-bskur ma-byas-par*  
*snying-po klong-yangs chos-nyid dkyil-'khor-na*  
*sngon-thog spyi-phud lha-chen ka-dag bzhugs*

<sup>19</sup> Graphically speaking, a mandala is a centered four. Padmasambhava's hermeneutical interpretation of it in his *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 129b, runs as follows:

*dkyil-'khor dkyil-'khor zhes-bya-ba*  
*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*

*dkyil-'khor* is called so because

*dkyil* is the vortex of (Being's) energy, and

*'khor* is (Being's) symbolic pregnancy and no-birth;

*dkyil* is the ground-that-has-been-since-time-before-time, and

*'khor* is the phenomenal and interpreted world as samsara and nirvana.

*dkyil* is (Being's) field-like dimensionality where meanings are born, and

*'khor* is (Being's) brilliancy, radiant and (symbolically) transparent.

Have been potentiated by (their) supraconscious ecstatic intensity that is absolutely free from the limits set by the categories of rational thought,  
 They will concretely attain (their) ultimate goal, (Being's) energy (as) the fore-structure of their humanity.  
 Without having entered the mandalas as lined out in the lower spiritual pursuits and  
 Without passing (through the ceremonies of) empowerment that are but an inordinate craving for doing (something) and for looking for something to do,  
 There dwells in a (real) mandala that is (Being's) energy, an ever widening vortex, (Being's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, (Being's) symbolic pregnancy, the primordial and very first "supreme God" (*lha-chen*).<sup>20</sup>

Padmasambhava combines his intuitive (*anschauliches*) and interpretive-hermeneutical (*verstehendes*) thinking in his elucidation of the two key phrases: *mkha' klong rnam-dag* and *rgya-mtsho klong gsal*, subtitles to his *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar* that by its very name, the "Blazing Light of Sun and Moon," already emphasizes his concern with a world of light.<sup>21</sup> Stylistically speaking, by making use of a refrain stanza he also shows himself to be a poet of no mean stature. His words concerning the first phrase that we may render freely as "the sky (that in its immensity forms) a vortex (that is infinitely rich in) translucent (potentialities)." Padmasambhava's complete hermeneutical elaboration runs as follows:<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> This term is a literal rendering of the Sanskrit word *mahādeva*, an epithet of Śiva. For a detailed study of Śiva see Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva*. For a comparative study of Śiva and Dionysus see Alain Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy*. A comparative study of Heruka, Śiva, and Dionysus might be a worthwhile research project.

<sup>21</sup> The full title of this work is *rGyud-kyi rtse rgyal-po Nyi-zla 'od-'bar mkha' klong mam-dag rgya-mtsho klong gsal*, 1: 122a–135a.

<sup>22</sup> *Nyi-zla 'od-'bar*, 1: 133b–134a:

*mkha' ni rig-pa'i 'od-gsal mkha'  
 klong ni snying-po chos-nyid klong  
 rnam-dag 'khrul-pa rnam-par dag  
 de-phyir mkha' klong rnam-dag rgyud*  
*mkha' ni rtсал-zer 'od-gsal-la  
 klong ni snying-po ka-dag klong  
 rnam-[134a] blos-btags chos-rnams 'gags  
 de-phyir mkha' klong mam-dag rgyud*  
*mkha' ni snang-gsal nam-mkha'-la  
 klong ni chos-nyid dbyings-kyi klong  
 mam-dag chos-can cho-'phrul dag*

*mkha'* means the radiant light of (the whole's and, by implication, the experiencer's) supraconscious ecstatic intensity;

*klong* means (the whole's) energy (as) the giving birth to thoughts/meanings;

*rnam-dag* means (the whole's) errancy [as a pure potentiality].

Therefore this treatise bears the (subtitle) *mkha' klong rnam-dag*.

*mkha'* means the radiant light of the rays of (the whole's) functionality;

*klong* means (the whole's) energy (as) symbolic pregnance;

*rnam-dag* means that all the notions postulated by the intellect have ceased [to exist].

Therefore this treatise bears the (subtitle) *mkha' klong rnam-dag*.

*mkha'* means that as to the sky-(like dimensionality of) the phenomenal in its radiance (its)

*klong* means (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (forming) the vortex of (the whole's) field-like dimensionality (in which the)

*rnam-dag* means the magic of the fully determinate "this" and "that" (as) pure potentiality—

Clouds and fog and vapors and rain and hail

Have been since time before time a potential presence in the sky as a vortex,

And so, in the vortex (that is the) sky-(like dimensionality) of (the whole's) energy

The rays of its functionality (manifesting itself in its) branchings have, in their entirety, been a potential presence.

Therefore this great treatise bears the (subtitle) *mkha' klong rnam-dag*.

No less impressive is Padmasambhava's elucidation of the second phrase that may be freely rendered as "the ocean (that in its depth forms) a vortex (that is a) sheer radiance." Padmasambhava's hermeneutical elaboration is poetically expressed in these words:<sup>23</sup>

---

*sprin dang khu-rlangs char-ser kun*  
*nam-mkha'i klong-du ye-nas dag*  
*de-bzhin snying-po mkha' klong-du*  
*yan-lag rtsal-zer ma-lus dag*  
*de-phyir mkha' klong rnam-dag rgyud-chen yin*

<sup>23</sup> Nyi-zla 'od-'bar, 1: 134a:

*rgya ni snying-po 'gyur-ba-med*  
*mtsho ni chos-nyid yangs-pa'i mtsho*  
*klong ni mtshon-med brjod-las-'das*  
*gsal ni skye-med ka-nas dag* [instead of the *gsal* in the printed version]  
*de-phyir rgya-mtsho klong gsal rgyud*  
*rgya-mtsho klong gsal bya-ba ni*

*rgya* means (the whole's) energy (in its) invariance (and)  
*mtsho* means (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings, ever  
 expanding;<sup>24</sup>

*klong* means undemonstrable and ineffable;

*gsal* means the (whole's) no-birth (and) symbolic pregnancy.

Therefore this treatise bears the (subtitle) *rgya-mtsho klong gsal*.

*rgya-mtsho klong gsal* means the following:

*rgya-mtsho* is (the whole's) energy (in being the whole's) no-birth;

*klong* is (the whole's) giving birth to thoughts/meanings (in the form  
 of the experiencer's) spiritual pursuits;

*gsal* is (the whole's) symbolic pregnancy (as) a blazing light.

Therefore this treatise bears the (subtitle) *rgya-mtsho klong gsal*.

By *rgya* (the fact that) there is nothing to arrest the experiencer's vi-  
 sion and nothing to serve as a basis for (ordinary vision) is pointed  
 out (and)

By *mtsho* non-objectifiability and non-vacillation is pointed out;

By *klong* inactivity<sup>25</sup> and the disengagement from thematic limitations  
 is pointed out;

By *gsal* (the whole's) primordially pure potentialities, unshrouded (by  
 thematic and emotional interferences with them) are pointed out.

Therefore this treatise bears the (subtitle) *rgya-mtsho klong gsal*.

Apart from what is best characterized as a celebration of light, these passages reflect Padmasambhava's ability to think of two contrary notions fused into a single dynamic one. If, in personalistic terms, the sky "high above" symbolizes the *in*-tensity of the masculine principle, Kun-tu bzang-po, the archetypal Father (*yab*) and the ocean "deep below" symbolizes the *ex*-tensity of the feminine principle, Kun-tu bzang-mo, the archetypal Mother (*yum*), one is tempted to identify their union with the idea of an archetypal andro-

---

*rgya-mtsho snying-po skye-med yin*  
*klong ni chos-nyid theg-pa'i klong*  
*gsal ni ka-dag 'od-bar gsal*  
*de-phyir rgya-mtsho klong gsal rgyud*

*rgya ni gtad-med rten-med bstan*  
*mtshos ni dmigs-med g.yo-med bstan*  
*klong ni byar-med spros-bral bstan*  
*gsal-bas ye-dag sgrib-med bstan*  
*des-na rgya-mtsho klong gsal rgyud*

<sup>24</sup> The compound *rgya-mtsho*, rendered in this form as "ocean," is here for hermeneu-  
 tical reasons split into *rgya* "huge" and *mtsho* "lake."

<sup>25</sup> *byar-med*. This technical term corresponds to Martin Heidegger's *Gelassenheit*, a  
 letting be. It is the opposite to ego-logical busybodying.

gyne. Such, however, is not the case with Padmasambhava. In a seemingly cryptic stanza he states:<sup>26</sup>

Kun-bzang's face, radiating throughout the ten regions of the compass,  
(and)

The archetypal Mother's *bhaga* mingle in a single vortex of bliss.

The term *bhaga* is untranslatable and we will have to rely on the hermeneutical interpretation of it:<sup>27</sup>

*bha* is said so because there is no attachment,

*ga* is said so because there is no desire;

*bha* is said so (because) there is an understanding of the appreciation principle,

*ga* is said so (because) there is an understanding of the effectiveness principle;

*bha* is said so because there is no birth,

*ga* is said so because there is no cessation;

*bha* is said so because there is (a stable) multiplicity,

*ga* is said so because there is (a protean) change;

*bha* is said so because everything is encompassed by it,

*ga* is said so because there is ultimate illusoriness.

<sup>26</sup> *sPros-bral don-gsal*, 1: 37b:

*kun-bzang zhal ni phyogs-bcu kun-tu gsal*  
*yum-gyi bhaga bde-klong gcig-tu 'khyil*

<sup>27</sup> The interpretation seems to have been inspired by Padmasambhava's hermeneutical thinking, but is not found in any of his works. The above translation is based on a passage in the *Thugs-kyi yang-snying ma-mo 'bum-tig*, 23: 130a:

*chags-pa med-pas bha zhes-bya*  
*'dod-pa med-pas ga zhes-bya*  
*shes-rab don rtogs bha zhes-bya*  
*thabs-kyi don rtogs ga zhes-bya*  
*skye-ba med-pas bha zhes-bya*  
*'gag-pa med-pas ga zhes-bya*  
*sna-tshogs 'byung-bas bha zhes-bya*  
*cir yang 'gyur-bas ga zhes-bya*  
*'kun-la khyab-pas bha zhes-bya*  
*rdzu-'phrul chen-po ga zhes-bya*

Then after listing eleven synonyms the unknown author states:

*mdor 'ub-kyis bsdus-na/ mkha' bzhi dbyings dang lnga/ bde-ba chen-po'i klong-*  
*dbyings-su 'khyil-ba*

By way of summary, the four sky-(like dimensionalities [of a mandala] with the field-like dimensionality [of the whole as the centre of the mandala] merge in the field-like dimensionality of the vortex of ultimate bliss.

Numerically speaking, we are back to a vibrant unitrinity: a binary male-female complementarity sustained by a “third” force that makes us beings of light, because our “substance,” the “stuff” we are made of, is light—radiant, luminous energy that itself is meaning through and through.

In conclusion we may say that Padmasambhava’s importance lies in the fact that he is first and foremost a process-oriented thinker, maybe even the first in recorded history. But what distinguishes him from other thinkers is the highly original imagery that he deftly employs in his study of man’s growth into his/her humanity. In this respect he is not only a thinker, but a poet as well, and as such he may still have an important role to play. I do not know of any better characterization of him than the German poet Hölderlin’s famous line:

*Dichterisch wohnet der Mensch*  
(Poetically Man dwells).

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- bCud-kyi yang-snying [= Rin-po-che bcud-kyi yang-snying thog-ma'i dras-thag gcod-pa spros-pa gcod-pa rtsa-ba'i rgyud, 2: 266a–271b].
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