

The Philosophical Background of Buddhist Tantrism

Buddhist philosophy is as varied a subject as can be. This is because the word 'philosophy' is a label for a set of problems and the varying answers to them. Two tendencies appear to be distinguishable in this large variety: the tendency seemingly to conceive of philosophy as essentially an intellectual discipline, and the tendency to consider it to be a way of living. On closer inspection, however, we find that the idea of philosophy as a way of conduct has been so predominant in Buddhism that even that which appears to be a merely intellectual procedure is only a means to further the paving of a way of life.¹ As a consequence no such philosophical systems have been developed which in C. D. Broad's words "only an inmate of a lunatic asylum would

¹Due to this peculiar nature of Eastern thought, William S. Haas, *The Destiny of the Mind*, p. 133, says: "And thus comes the realization that the term philosophy is actually inapplicable—that it serves to obscure and to falsify the spirit of Eastern thought," and ". . . the East attempts to establish immediate contact with the Real." In coining the useful term 'philousia' he characterizes those Indian and Eastern 'philosophies' for which Essence or Isness is of decisive importance. However, 'philousia' is not applicable to Tantric thought, unless it be specified still more. It should be noted that 'essence' has become a rather confused term since its use in scholasticism; and it is a dangerous procedure to impose on Eastern texts a terminology which is hardly suited to elucidate the different structure of Eastern thought.

think of carrying into daily life.”² Philosophy, in the Buddhist sense, becomes rather an expression of that which is most human in human beings, but it is not an automatic phenomenon. It is born or conditioned, so to speak, when man awakens to the fact that he is more than a specimen of an abstract class. When this happens he is instinctively philosophical (*rigs nges-pa*)³. Because of his humanness the philosopher ranks highest in the hierarchy of human beings, which is supposed to consist of three or four levels. On the lowest plane is the unregenerate man (*so-so-skye-bo*)⁴ who has to be told at every step what to do and what

²C. D. Broad, *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, p. 5. Certain translations of Eastern texts seem to contradict my argument. The reason is that many translators are unable to grasp the distinction between the use of an expression and the analysis of its meaning, which is of utmost importance for philosophical considerations, as A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (Pelican Book), pp. 8 *seq.*, has shown. Unless analytical and phenomenological methods are applied, Eastern, and in particular Buddhist, philosophy will not reveal its intrinsic value, but remain an oddity or sentimentality. The analytical method would coincide in many respects with what I. A. Richards has called ‘Multiple Definition’. See his *Mencius on the Mind: Experiments in Multiple Definition*.

³Lit.: ‘belonging to a definite family’ (Skt. *niyata-kula*). The above interpretation of this term is the one given by Padma dkar-po in his *Jo-bo Nā-ro-pa'i khyad-chos bsre-pho'i gzhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 6a. In the following this text will be quoted under its abbreviated title *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*. With the exception of the terms of the Pratītyasamutpāda (‘Law of Interdependent Origination’ or, more appropriately, ‘Inductive Principle of Function Relation’) I have refrained from giving the Sanskrit equivalents of the Tibetan terms. The reason is that I deal with indigenous Tibetan texts, not with translations from Sanskrit. Further, the Tibetan terms are more exact as to meaning than the Sanskrit ones and hence do not easily lead to confusion in a subject which by nature is abstruse and difficult. To give one example: everyone is familiar with the three terms *kāya*, *vāk*, *citta* in Sanskrit, usually translated by ‘body’, ‘speech’ and ‘mind’. The Tibetan equivalents are *lus*, *ngag*, *gid*, although *gid* usually stands for Skt. *manas*. But there is another set of words in Tibetan for the same triad, viz., *sku*, *gsung*, *thugs*. Not only is the usage of this set different from that of *lus*, *ngag*, *gid*, it also has a different realm of meanings. Again A. J. Ayer’s reference to the distinction between usage and meaning becomes important. The Sanskrit language has no such two sets. Any translation from Tibetan, which does not point out this marked difference and which merely interprets the text on the assumption of the inexact Sanskrit terminology, must necessarily be a distortion, if not a falsification.

⁴*Dags-po'i chos-bzhi'i rnam-bshad skyes-bu gsum-gyi lam nyin-mor byed-pa*, fol. 10b.

not. Then come those who follow a certain code of morals, especially those who have renounced a worldly life (*rab-tu byung-ba*, *dge-slong*),⁵ but more often than not have turned escapists; and finally there is the philosopher (*rnal-'byor-pa*).⁶ At his level two ways are open. The one is to pile up arguments, rebuttals, counter-arguments and rejoinders without end—it is this aspect which has become widely known and is dealt with in most works on Buddhist philosophy. The other, hardly touched upon as yet, is to absorb what has been said, be it in a book or by a person, into one's own life, to make it one's own and to return it to one's fellow-beings with a new and deeper sense. This is what sKye-med bde-chen understands by philosophy:

Others explain by commentaries after (having read) the basic text;

We, however, are tied down to the basic text after having been instructed by our Gurus.

Since the philosophical enterprise of those who belong to the group that transmits its knowledge orally (*bKa'-brgyud*) is not completed by writing about it,

I merely record the instruction by my Guru, not going beyond his permission.⁷

This way of philosophizing, which is characteristic for the mystic, is grounded in the firm conviction that experience alone provides a basis for philosophy and is able to make life healthier,

⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 15b. The *rab-tu byung-ba* is a man who has renounced life in a home (Skt. *pravrajita*); the *dge-slong* is a fully ordained monk or Bhikṣu.

⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 48b seq. This term is often given in its Sanskrit form as *yogi* in translations, which means 'a man who has to do with *yoga*'. According to the *Lam-zab-kyi rnam-par bshad-pa zab-lam-gyi snye-ma*, fol. 21b, *yoga* (*rnal-'byor*) is the non-duality of action and discriminating awareness (*thabs shes gnyis-su med-pa'i don-la rnal-'byor zhes btags-pa*). This non-duality of action and awareness is man's existential unity, both as starting point and goal of his endeavour.

⁷ *Do-ha-mdzod ces-bya-ba spyod-pa'i glu'i 'grel-pa don-gyi sgron-ma* (*Dohākoṣa-nāma-caryāgīti-arthapradīpa-nāma-ṭīkā*), *bsTan-'gyur* (Derge ed.), *rgyud*, vol. zhi, fol. 34a. The same idea is expressed by gNyi-med-avadhūti in his *Do-ha-mdzod-kyi snying-po don-gyi glu'i 'grel-pa* (*Dohākoṣa-hṛdaya-arthagīti-ṭīkā*), *ibid.*, fol. 66a. A disciple is permitted to practice or engage in philosophical works only after having received his Guru's authorization (*lung*). In many cases the permission is identical in words with the text for study.

more beautiful, more complete and more satisfactory. The mystic understands experience in perhaps a still wider sense than does A. N. Whitehead in contemporary philosophy, and knowledge is for him more than the succession of momentary contents in consciousness. For he is constantly aware of the fact that it is possible to 'know' without having knowledge in the conscious sense which is often hardly more than a process of accretion. In experience, knowledge and reality are given together and cannot, without contradiction, be separated from each other. Since reality is not one thing among other things, but is everything, there can be no unknowable.⁸ The failure to realize this fact is mainly due to our habit of confining ourselves to wholly pragmatic lines of conduct which for the most part remain on a low level of awareness. This confinement is equal to submitting ourselves, intellectually, to an absurdity which will bring forth many others of its kind, and emotionally, to a conflict—all of which is designated by the technical term *ma-rig-pa*, which may be variously translated by 'unawareness', 'unknowing', 'nescience' and even 'ignorance'. However, that which is designated by this term does not exclude knowledge in a general way. The difference between 'ignorance' (*ma-rig-pa*) and 'knowledge proper' (*rig-pa*) is that in the former case knowledge and emotion have not fused into understanding, because by habit the individual does not let them fuse or is even on guard against their doing so. In the latter case, however, the fusion has come about. Knowledge, in whatever sense we may take it, has a feeling tone, or as M. Oakeshott remarks: "Knowledge as something apart from that which affords satisfaction in experience is an idle fancy."⁹ A further point to note here is that in the linkage of 'misery' (*sdug-bsngal*) with 'ignorance' (*ma-rig-pa*) and of 'bliss' (*bde-ba*) with 'knowledge proper' (*rig-pa*) the observable fact is brought out that pleasure marks furthered activity and pain unresolved conflicts, the thwarting of activity, and that the more coherent and unitary the world of our experience

⁸Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes*, p. 50 seq.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 41.

becomes the more intense is the feeling of satisfaction. The uniqueness of experience comprising both knowledge and emotional appreciation, cannot be reduced to something already 'known' without losing its character of experience. It can only be pointed to by symbols which do not stand for anything as the symbol 'dog' does to that which it stands for, and which are guideposts, indices and, possibly, stimulants evoking within people who are ready to expand the range of their perception, the experience which those who have had it consider the most worthwhile one among all possible experiences. Thus "Everything, from the Buddha to an ordinary sentient being, becomes a gateway to the 'radiant mind' which is called the Ultimate."¹⁰

Although mysticism is not a philosophical school, but the perennial philosophy in the strictest sense of the word, certain mystics have figured preeminently in tradition and gathered a following. In Buddhism this mystic trend is said to derive from the Buddha himself and, in later times, is particularly associated with the mystic Tilopa (A.D. 988-1069) and his immediate followers. He sums up the philosophical quest in the words:

Reality, the Way, and the Modes of Reality-Actualization.¹¹

Each of these indices offers a number of problems. Here only the first will be discussed, in particular with reference to the symbol 'The Great Seal' (*phyag-rgya chen-po*, Skt. *mahāmudrā*), by which the followers of this mystic experience describe their approach to and conception of reality.

Although our world of experience is one world, not two, it may appear and disappear for us in two opposite perspectives: either as our plain self, our empirical existence and all that we perceive through it, or as transcendence which we arrive at as

¹⁰*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 13b. 'Radiant mind' (*'od-gsal-ba'i sems, prabhāsvaracitta*) is to be understood as an index. It is not a mind as an entity.

¹¹*bKa' yang-dag-pa'i tshad-ma zhes-bya-ba mkha'-'gro-ma'i man-ngag*, fol. 1. The authoritative version of this text of the *bKa'-brgyud-pa* school of Buddhism varies in the arrangement of this subject matter from the version contained in the *bsTan-'gyur* (Derge ed.), *rgyud*, vol. zhi, fol. 271 seq.

the last thing, though not as an entitative object, and which nevertheless is in itself the first and present in all our queries. In a seemingly less technical language Tilopa says:

Reality is twofold: the presence of the 'body' (*lus*) and that of the mind (*sems*).¹²

Such would be the literal, linguistically correct translation. Unfortunately, like most literal translations, it fails to convey anything of what is to be understood by this aphorism. The Tibetan term *lus*, which is usually translated by 'body' (as provisionally done here), does not mean the body-object described by biologists, but the body as lived in by the subject. It is a term for the plain self or our givenness (*gdags-pa'i gzhi*) as evident in bodily act, speech and thought. 'Body' (*lus*) thus refers to the whole man, body-mind, and is a name for the 'psycho-organismal individual'.¹³ Similarly, the term *sems* which has been rendered by 'mind' does not signify what we usually understand by 'mind', which in Tibetan is termed *yid* and is included in the 'body' (*lus*) as a short term for the complex psycho-organismal patterns. But even *yid* is not merely 'consciousness' which we usually mean when we use the word 'mind', but it comprises the unconscious of modern psychology as well. In another sense, *yid* is a term for that which philosophers call the 'existential self', psychologists the 'self' (C. G. Jung), the 'super-ego' (S. Freud, J. C. Flugel), the 'psychic factor' (C. D. Broad), the 'metaphysical factor' or the 'called-in factor' (N. Jaquin), and biologists the 'Z-factor' (C. J. Herrick). In Buddhism another name for it is the 'subtle ego' (*phra-ba bdag*), and the texts make it abundantly clear that this is only an index, not an entity.¹⁴ Finally, in the highly technical language of mystic philosophy it is called 'indestructible potential creativity' (*mi-*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³I owe this term to G. E. Coghill and C. Judson Herrick, *The Evolution of Human Nature*, p. 274.

For the following analysis see in particular *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 7b seq.

¹⁴*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 6b.

shigs-pa'i thig-le). This cannot be said to be either physical or mental, it is irreducible to anything and prior to everything. It is not an entity; neither is it some 'stuff'. It is meaningful by its use. It may either refer itself to itself and thereby to its transcendence or, if we may say so, it may become 'distorted' by the carry-over of experience-traces (*bags-chags*) and under suitable conditions give rise to a new 'mind' which means a thinking organism.¹⁵

It is now evident that *sems* is not the same as *yid* or 'mind'. It encompasses 'body-mind'. Therefore, in order to distinguish it from 'mind' we shall render it by 'spirit' or 'spirituality'. But it will be necessary to be fully aware of the fact that our 'spirit' and the Tibetan *sems* are only indices which name without characterizing and so avoid the inane thesis of spiritualism. Another possible translation would be 'Mind' with a capital letter. In this case we also would have to be careful not to interpret this term as referring to some sort of mentalism. On the basis of this analysis of the two key-terms *lus* and *sems*, Tilopa's statement can now be rendered more adequately:

Reality is twofold: the psycho-organismal individual and spirituality.

Spirituality is said to 'take its stand on', 'to ascend', the psycho-organism. 'Reality is twofold' therefore means that spirituality, as that which takes its stand on the psycho-organism as its basis, is present as that which encompasses the basis while leaving it intact. The relation is similar to that between the flower and its scent. Just as without being aware of the flower one cannot experience its fragrance so also without knowing the reality of the psycho-organism as the basis one cannot fully realize the reality of spirituality as that which takes its stand on the former. Hence in the beginning of our philosophical quest the nature of the psycho-organism has to be elucidated. As is stated in the *brTag-gnyis* (*Hevajra-mūla-tantrarāja*):

¹⁵*Ibid.*, fol. 14b.

How can there be bliss in the absence of the psycho-organism?

It is impossible to speak of bliss (in such a case).

According to the relation between the encompassed and the
encompasser

Bliss encompasses a sentient being.

In the same way as the fragrance of a flower

Cannot be experienced in the absence of the flower,

Bliss is without meaning

In the absence of psycho-organismal patterns.

And in the *Samputa*:

If one does not know the nature of the psycho-organism

Through the eighty-four thousand constituents of reality,

They all fail to bear their fruit.

“Since by being aware of the psycho-organism as the basis one becomes aware of the abode of that which takes its stand on it, spirituality, man’s fulfilment is not an automatic process. It may be likened to the following: Although milk is present with the cow’s existence, it does not spout forth when the horns of the cow are squeezed, but when the udder is pulled.”¹⁶

The statement that spirituality takes its stand on the psycho-organism can only be understood in the light of the opening statement about the all-encompassing nature of reality. Spirituality is not something apart from and above reality; it becomes an actuality when man goes a certain way, which means if he strives for an enlargement and enrichment of life in every possible manner. Going-a-way begins with the given and ever-present, not with the postulation of a hypothesis. In stating that the Way leads from the psycho-organismal individual or the immediately given through its analysis to spirituality as the culmination of one’s efforts, Padma dkar-po anticipates J. W. von Goethe’s aphorism:

¹⁶*Ibid.*, fol. 7b See also *Jo-Bo Nā-ro-pa’i khyad-chos bsre-’pho’i khrid rdo-rje’i theg-par bgrod-pa’i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 4b. In the following this text will be quoted under its abbreviated title *rDo-rje’i theg-par bgrod-pa’i shing-rta chen-po*.

If you want to approach the Infinite
Examine the finite on every side.¹⁷

When it is further stated that spirituality is 'action-born' (*thabs-byung*)¹⁸ this shows that spirituality is evolved in the course of one's endeavor, not that it is produced like gastric juice by the stomach. Spirituality is not just a negligible by-product, hence the Tantric conception of it cannot be equated with epiphenomenalism. On the other hand, there is here in Tantrism also no search for explanation or causal theory. It is true that there is a 'forward reference' but that does not imply the metaphysical principle of teleological causation, rather there is here a kind of natural teleology which coincides with the progressive enhancement of values in the growth of man. Spirituality thus 'emerges' in course of evolution, because it is at the 'bottom' of it. Thus the statement that spirituality takes its stand on the psycho-organism as part of reality shows that, on the one hand, it is an acquisition and, on the other, there always occurs in human life something which gains ascendancy and controls further behavior. This intimate relation between our plain self and spirituality serves another useful purpose in philosophy. It opens our eyes to reality and prevents us from allowing ourselves to be separated from it by believing ourselves to be either this or that and thereby ceasing to be real, or rather, remaining partly real.¹⁹ It is certainly of no use and contrary to the conception of philosophy as a way of life to lose the ground under one's feet and to let oneself be swallowed up by an alleged Absolute which by definition can have nothing to do with man. The idea of an Absolute which received its apotheosis by Hegel creates more difficulties than it can bear and is as contradictory and nonsensical as the Kantian unknowableness of reality.²⁰

¹⁷Willst Du ins Unendliche schreiten
Gehe im Endlichen nach allen Seiten.

¹⁸*rDo-rje'i theg-par bgrod-pa'i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 4b.

¹⁹Buddhist Tantrism is opposed to the idea that Reality can be divided or that there are different layers of Reality with different degrees of Reality. See "The Concept of Mind in Buddhist Tantrism."

²⁰A pertinent critique of the idea of an Absolute is contained in William S. Haas, *The Destiny of the Mind*, p. 155.

Since reality cannot be anything less than the whole, the way from partial reality to full reality also cannot be something apart, nor can there be any essential difference between the part and the whole.²¹ Therefore the starting point must not be considered in aloofness from the goal and the way to it. This is evident from the interpretation of the term Mahāmudrā (*phyag-rgya chen-po*) which is used to denote the whole of reality. Literally translated it means the 'Great Seal' and is explained as "'Seal' has the double meaning of 'imprinting' and 'not going beyond', while 'great' means that 'nothing superior is possible'."²²

Logical analysis has shown that language has often created problems which on closer inspection turned out to be pseudo-problems.²³ So in order not to be accused of having succumbed to a pseudo-problem or having created one, let us see what is the real meaning of 'seal' in this term 'Great Seal' (*mahā-mudrā*).

²¹*bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 66b. See also *ibid.*, fol. 55a.

²²*Phyag-rgya-chen-po'i man-ngag-gi bshad-sbyar rgyal-ba'i gan-mdzod*, fol. 26a; *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 87a; *bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 19b.

²³In *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, ed. by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, the technical term 'Mahāmudrā' is rendered as 'The Great Symbol'. Apart from the fact that this translation is not supported by the original texts and that the editor's comments have nothing to do with the term in question, C. G. Jung adduces this wrong rendering as proof for the correctness of his interpretation of mind as a symbol. His 'Psychological Commentary' is thus a comment on the usage of the English word 'symbol', but not on what the text indicates by 'Mahāmudrā'. Since most translations of Eastern texts fail to give an analysis of the meaning of the terms used, commentaries on them, psychological or otherwise, are hardly able to elucidate the philosophical ideas. Anyone who engages in comparative studies should be mindful of I. A. Richards' words in his *Mencius on the Mind*, pp. 91 seq.: "The danger to be guarded against is our tendency to force a structure, which our special kind of Western training (idealist, realist, positivist, Marxist, etc.) makes easiest for us to work with, upon modes of thinking which may very well not have any such structure at all—and which may not be capable of being analysed by means of this kind of logical machinery. As we do so all chance of genuine comparative studies is wiped out." Valuable attempts in the direction indicated by I. A. Richards, are F. S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry concerning World Understanding*, New York: 1946, and William S. Haas, *The Destiny of the Mind: East and West*, New York: 1956.

With the idea of 'seal' we tend to connect the idea of causation. The proposition 'a seal leaves an impression' may be rephrased as 'a seal causes a certain material to bear an impression'. In asserting such a proposition the plain man would say that the material under consideration would not bear an impression unless a seal had been pressed on it. He would regard the cause as relevant to the effect. He would also assume that since the cause and the effect are determined with equal precision, the relation will be one-one, so that given the effect, the cause is thereby determined, and *vice versa*. This distinction between cause and effect further means that the cause precedes the effect. The relation holding between cause and effect is thus asymmetrical, that is, if xRy , then never yRx .

This idea of causation does not attach to the Tantric ideal of 'seal'. The relation expressed here is symmetrical, so that if xRy , then always yRx . This is evident from Saraha's statement:

Nothingness is sealed by appearance
And appearance by nothingness.²⁴

The same symmetrical relation with reference to cause and effect, which, if the distinction between cause and effect were so sharp as common sense assumes it to be, would give rise to the awkward statement that the effect precedes the cause, is stated in the *Kālacakra-mūla-tantra*:²⁵

The semblance risen from nothingness is the cause,
The pleasure born from invariableness is the effect:
The effect is to be sealed by the cause,
But also the cause by the effect.

The last part of this quotation is already found in the *Guhyasamājatantra*²⁶ and therefore the idea of 'seal' as a symmetrical relation is a very old one. It seems that here we have

²⁴*sKu'i mdzod 'chi-med rdo-rje'i glu (Kāyakoṣāmṛtavajragīti)*, *bsTan-'gyur* (Derge ed.), *rgyud*, vol. zhi, fol. 112b.

²⁵Quoted in *Phyag-rgya-chen-po'i man-ngag-gi bshad-sbyar rgyal-ba'i gan-mdzod*, fol. 27a. See also Sekoddeśatikā, p. 70.

²⁶*Guhyasamājatantra* XVIII, p. 157.

the principle of circular causation which can best be illustrated by the device by which a guided missile is directed towards a moving target by sound waves, light rays or other emanations from the target. There is a sort of 'feed-back' from the goal and the end does control the means. The action, however, is here and now, although the goal to be reached is in a future time as yet undetermined.²⁷

The second meaning of 'seal' as 'not going beyond' indicates that, if everything bears the seal of reality, there is no way away from reality and this is a kind of commitment.²⁸

The inseparableness of cognition and emotional appreciation in experience, the index character of all the technical terms used in the process of philosophizing and the principle of circular causation are met with again in greater detail in the elucidation of the meaning of 'spirituality' (*sems-kyi gnas-lugs*). Here in particular it will become evident that all that is being said is a stimulus to that which K. Jaspers seems to have divined by speaking of 'transcending the object within the object thinking'²⁹ and which William S. Haas more succinctly terms 'withdrawing from or shedding what there is of objective constructions'.³⁰ Such a procedure is facilitated by the use of mantric syllables which hardly ever become objectifying concepts and therefore, instead of freezing life, are better suited

²⁷The question is whether under such circumstances the term causality is to be retained. Bertrand Russell is in favor of excluding the word from the philosophical vocabulary. William S. Haas, *loc. cit.*, p. 209, plainly states: "Not even the law of causality can be said to bear the meaning it has in Western philosophy and science," and with reference to Karma he says on the same page pertinently: "The relation between the karmatic tendencies or the cravings which survive death and their concurrent appearances as rebirth cannot be conceived under the image of cause and effect. The only adequate kind of relation is that prevailing in the magic world. This has been formulated as 'if or when there is *a*, there is *b*'. Such a relation is foreign to and beyond time and is therefore incompatible with causality though certainly it is no less effective." It seems the 'primitive' magic world is more akin to the 'advanced' modern mind than any other rational system.

²⁸*bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 19b.

²⁹Karl Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, p. 22.

³⁰William S. Haas, *The Destiny of the Mind*, p. 181.

to an exploration of its realm of possibilities. This mantric element we find in a passage by Padma dkar-po:³¹

By giving the ending of the seventh case (locative) to the letter A elucidating nothingness (*stong-pa nyid*) we obtain the letter E. By this designation we refer to 'discriminating awareness' (*shes-rab*) having the property of nothingness endowed with all causal characteristics, otherwise symbolized by spaciousness and the ground of all and everything. By the letter VAM we refer to 'action' (*thabs*) having the property of compassion and unchanging great bliss. The combination E-VAM is to indicate that to the extent that there is discriminating awareness there is also action and *vice versa*.

This short passage contains a number of highly technical terms and suggestive ideas, all of which need some explanation and analysis. The locative case is indicative of the terminus of the noetic act and corresponds to what we would call the content of consciousness. However, the content is not of primary importance; it is utterly contingent and may be absent without consciousness thereby losing its validity. This is the reverse of what most Western philosophies would assert, namely that in the absence of content there can be no consciousness. One may even go so far as to say that in Tantrism consciousness is ontologically prior to content, in which case the terms 'consciousness' and 'ontological' would have to be re-defined. Discriminating awareness' (*shes-rab*) is essentially a manifesting and illumining function, not a creation of a new object, and in order to perform this function it must in itself be as nothing (*stong-pa, stong-pa-nyid*). This nothing, of course, is no absolute nothing which would mean an object that just is not. As Padma dkar-po observes:

'Nothingness endowed with all causal characteristics' is not something which the investigating intellect does not perceive. This simply is not. The nothingness in question is actually experienceable.³²

³¹*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 58b.

³²*bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 60a.

It is the almost imperceptible moment which one may experience between sleep and full awakening; the moment which is so full of lucidity and awareness only to become instantaneously eclipsed by the sundry contents of 'normal' consciousness. In the more technical language of existentialist philosophy it is an "outstretched nothingness ready to be filled with any structure, but in itself not determined at all."³³ To this meaning of 'nothingness' corresponds the index 'spaciousness' in the above quotation. As a matter of fact, there is room for everything because there are no *a priori* limits to the scope of experience. Moreover, since awareness is not the bringing forth of some new entity, because awareness itself is not a thing, least of all a container of some sort, the phenomenon can unfold and present itself as it is³⁴ without fear of being distorted by conceptual interference and hence we are entitled to say with Padma dkar-po that awareness is the stable 'ground' on which all that we may experience, can rest securely. In view of the fact that, as the terms 'nothingness', 'spaciousness' and others imply, there can be awareness without anything of which awareness is aware, the statement that this nothingness is 'endowed with all causal characteristics' demands an interpretation different from the one we usually tend to give to endowment. Certainly, it does not mean possession. This would, as William S. Haas points out, presuppose "an instrument to seize what it wishes to bring in to its forum. And this instrument is the concept. Going to and fro between subject and object in the process of knowledge it links both together and at the same time keeps them apart."³⁵ There is here no concept to distort the pure 'being-there' of any phenomenon. And thus the 'endowment' is more of the nature of a possibility to become terminated in a definite content rather than the content itself which by way of conceptualizing thought

³³ John Wild, *The Challenge of Existentialism*, p. 222.

³⁴ This is referred to in the texts by the term *rang-snang*. See *rTen-'brel kho-bo lugs-kyi khrid chos thams-cad-kyi snying-po len-pa*, fol. 2b; 4a; *The Concept of Mind in Buddhist Tantrism*.

³⁵ William S. Haas, *The Destiny of the Mind*, p. 182.

may be split up into causal and non-causal aspects. This qualifying term again is an index to awareness as a process manifesting itself in every possible mode and content.

Unlike conceptual thought which forever consists in the effort to discover, invent or create a new and 'objective' reality which for some time even may be considered as indisputable (although this indisputableness is mere wishful thinking), awareness. It is nothing in itself, and is, so to speak, at rest and self-contented. This accounts for the fact that pure awareness is said to be linked with unchanging blissfulness which in a more tangible sense is compassion (*snying-rje*). It is, as the text points out, co-extensive with awareness. Again it will be necessary to clarify the meaning of this term. Compassion must not be confused with sentimentality which is a passing mood and linked with a definite content in consciousness.³⁶ It will change as quickly as the content is replaced by another one. Compassion has a thoroughly stabilizing character and remains the same with itself. This again has nothing to do with staticness which so often is ascribed to Eastern mentality. The text itself declares that it is 'action' (*thabs*) which we, to put it bluntly, usually tend to identify with 'doing things', 'busy-bodilying', and creating wants instead of feeling contentment with the present. The co-extensiveness of awareness and compassion can be clarified in still another way. Inasmuch as awareness is nothing in itself its terminal content or its continuing phenomena can also be viewed as emp-

³⁶One has to distinguish between compassion as a constitutive mode of human existence, which is often termed Great Compassion and equated with unchanging great bliss, and compassion in the ordinary sense of the word as a sentiment. The latter has its root in hatred. See *Bar-do'i chos-bshad mi-rtag sgyu-ma'i bang-chen dang-po*, fol. 8b seq.; *dPal mtshungs-med rgyal-dbang chos-rjes mdzad-pa'i bar-do gsol-'debs-kyi dgongs-don mdo-tsam bkral-ba myur-lam zab-mo'i them-skas*, fol. 12a seq.; *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 187a. In this respect one is reminded of Max Scheler's analysis of altruism and similar forms of modern sentimentality which are based on resentment, on hatred of higher values. According to him an attitude of hatred and envy leads to egalitarian and humanitarian ideals as the fundamental denial of love. Altruism based upon resentment, on the one hand, and compassion as a form of hatred, on the other, may well become the subject matter of a comparative study.

ty frames which in their emptiness, paradoxically speaking, are filled with a feeling tone remaining always the same. The reason is that the phenomena do not affect this pure awareness and hence are unable to change the inherent feeling tone or emotional value.

Padma dkar-po gives still another account of what is to be understood by 'presence of spirituality' (*sems-kyi gnas-lugs*). He says:

Discriminating awareness (*shes-rab*) which is 'commonly accepted truth' (*kun-rdzob-kyi bden-pa*) because of its lucidity (*gsal*) or because of its being nothingness endowed with all causal characteristics or its having a certain reference, is factually (*ngo-bo-nyid-kyis*) present as twelve 'truth-indices' (*bden-don*). Action (*thabs*) which is either unchanging great bliss because all changeability has come to an end, or 'ultimately significant truth' (*don-dam-pa'i bden-pa*) because of its profoundness (*zab*) or the fact that it does not proceed by concept, is the factual completeness of sixteen degrees of compassion. Both discriminating awareness and compassion enter factually into the relation of coincidence (*zung-'jug*) or a sevenfold union (*kha-sbyor bdun*)³⁷ because they do not exist as and cannot be split up into two separate entities. As E-VAM they are present in the psycho-organismal individual (*lus*) by taking their stand on the indestructible potential creativity (*mi-shigs-pa'i thig-le*) in the six focal points of possible experience. However, since both the basis and that which takes its stand on it are known to be beyond conceptuality, they are not 'body-born' and hence do not disintegrate with the decay of the body. Therefore one speaks of 'natural co-emergence' (*rang-bzhin lhan-cig-skyes-pa*).³⁸

This passage again contains a number of concepts and terms, essentially as a means and to the extent that they are use-

³⁷'Sevenfold union' is the name for the various aspects of the satisfaction inherent in the experience of non-duality. They are the non-duality of the two kinds of truth, relative and ultimate; the fusion with the bliss therein; the incorruptibility of this bliss; the non-entitative character of this; its great compassionateness that transcends every dichotomy; its continuity, and unendingness. See *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 132ab; *bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 6b.

³⁸*rDo-rje'i theg-par bgrod-pa'i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 8b seq.

ful for the preparation of realization, not for the purpose of exteriorizations with an apparent objective existence. Special emphasis is laid on the factuality (*Tatsächlichkeit, ngo-bo-nyid*) of the topics under consideration. This term is often translated by 'essence', although no evidence is found for it. The usage of this term in Tibetan corresponds to our word 'factuality'. There is here no problem as to the 'essence of' a thing, because in Buddhism the essence of a thing is the thing itself. Apart from the fact that the term 'essence' is a rather muddle-headed concept even in Western philosophies, there is no reason to introduce into Eastern philosophies something which is not there. In addition one should be on guard against committing what Bertrand Russell calls "a transference to metaphysics of what is only a linguistic convenience."³⁹

Lucidity (*gsal*) indicates that by transcending the realm of object thinking one arrives at a new dimension which carries more insight and hence is symbolically referred to by terms denoting light. The new dimension is a more enlightened state of cognition than the relative darkness of the ordinary three-dimensional situation or 'ignorance' (*ma-rig-pa*). At the same time this more enlightened cognition is supported by and reaches deeper down into a feeling of satisfaction. Similarly we too speak of 'feeling deeply'. The overcoming of the shallowness of a passing sentiment coincides with the growing perspicacity of the cognitive process. Hence lucidity and profoundness are co-emergent (*zab-gsal lhan-cig-skyes-pa*).⁴⁰ Being a unitary

³⁹Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 224.

⁴⁰*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 129b. 'Co-emergence' is one of the key-notes of Buddhist Tantrism. The term *lhan-cig-skyes-pa* means literally 'born together' and corresponds to Skt. *saha-ja*. In *The Concept of Mind in Buddhist Tantrism*, I translated this term by 'co-nascent'. Afterwards I found that this English rendering was also used in connection with one of Buddhaghosa's conditions (*sahaja-paccaya*) which, however, is different from the Tantric conception. It is therefore advisable to have another term. 'Co-emergence' is one of the leitmotifs of Saraha's *Dohākoṣa* of which an English translation, full of grammatical mistakes and serious misunderstandings of the significance of the verses, is found in E. Conze's *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*. This translation ignores the Tibetan text and the commentaries thereon. In it the important term

process, co-emergence is not the manifestation of two juxtaposed entities. Juxtaposition belongs to the realm of things, i.e. isolable entities, but here there is no such realm.⁴¹ This is expressed by stating that there is natural co-emergence (*rang-bzhin lhan-cig-skyes-pa*). Or as Padma dkar-po points out elsewhere, 'Because profoundness and lucidity are such that their

lhan-cig-skyes-pa (sahaja) is rendered by 'Innate' for which the translator can adduce as only authority the wrong French translation of this term by 'l'Inné'. Texts like the *Phyag-rgya-chen-po'i man-ngag-gi bshad-sbyar rgyal-ba'i gan-mdzod*, fol. 39a seq.; the *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 60b, 129a, and others make it abundantly clear that there is nothing of innatism in Tantric philosophy. One example may suffice to show that by ignoring the Tibetan tradition the *Dohās*, which are at the core of Tantric thought, fail to reveal their significance. The beginning of *Dohā* no. 38 (36) means according to the Pañjikā in P. C. Bagchi's edition, *Dohākoṣa* (= Calcutta Sanskrit Series, No. 25c):

The root of mind is not demonstrable,
In co-emergence three topics are false.

According to M. Shahidulla's edition, *Les Chants mystiques de Saraha et de Kāṇha*, the same verse is given as

The root of mind is not demonstrable,
In co-emergence three topics are true.

D. L. Snellgrove translates the *Apabhraṃśa* version as follows:

They do not perceive the true basis of mind,
For upon the Innate they impose a threefold falsification.
Where thought arises and where it dissolves,
There you should abide, O my son.

In the *Apabhraṃśa* text there is no equivalent for the translator's 'thought'. But what does the Tibetan tradition say? Together with the commentary by *gNyi-med-avadhūti*, *Do-ha-mdzod-kyi snying-po don-gyi glu'i 'grel-pa* (*Dohākoṣa-hṛdaya-arthagīti-ṭīkā*), *bsTan-'gyur* (Derge ed.), *rgyud*, vol. zhi, fol. 76a seq., this verse means:

"The root of all entities is mind, but since mind is not found as something existing by itself as the root of everything it is undemonstrable. Hence (Saraha says): 'The root of mind is undemonstrable'. Appearance or mental events rise from non-memory, remain in it and fade into it, therefore the co-emergence of appearance (with non-memory) is experienceable in/through non-memory. Mind, in the absence of conditions for its appearance as mental events is non-memory or nothingness (*stong-pa-nyid*, *Sūnyatā*). This nothingness rises from unoriginatedness, stays therein and fades back into it. Hence the co-emergence of nothingness (with unoriginatedness) is experienceable in/through unoriginatedness. Mind as such (*sems-nyid*), in the absence of the origination of either memory or non-memory, is beyond origination and

actuality cannot be divided, they are co-emergent'. Viewed from another angle this co-emergence is the logical relation of coincidence (*zung-'jug*).⁴²

Lucidity (E) and profoundness (VAM) take their stand on, i.e. control, what is termed 'indestructible potential creativity' (*mi-shigs-pa'i thig-le*). This may either point beyond itself to its transcendence referred to in other texts as 'radiant light' (*'od-gsal*), or under the control of lucidity and profoundness it becomes the seminal root of a psycho-organism (*lus*), the cradle of which is motility (*rlung*) proceeding along structural pathways (*rtsa*). It is important to note that this 'taking its stand on' does not mean the interaction of two entities. Actually 'lucidity' and 'profoundness' as determinants of spirituality (*sems*) are not different from potential creativity. They are this potential creativity viewed from its controlling (gaining ascendancy) or value aspect. Padma dkar-po is quite explicit on this point. He says that "in view of the basis (structure)-forming aspect one speaks of pathways (*rtsa*); in view of the dynamic process, of motility (*rlung*); in view of the control or value, of potential creativity (*thig-le*)."⁴³ Due to the fact that there are

destruction, it is beyond the realm of the intellect. Since the ultimate of all entities rises, stays in and fades into this reality stretching across time (i.e. not being a content in time), by the co-emergence of unoriginatedness (with that which is beyond the intellect, transcendence) one understands the inconceivable (or transcendence). Hence when one understands mind (as Saraha implies by his words): 'Through the three modes of co-emergence', then, because appearance, nothingness and unoriginatedness disappear where they originate, (or as Saraha puts it): 'Where they originate and where they vanish', it is impossible to find the ultimate of all entities even if one seeks for it and (so Saraha concludes): 'One does not really know where they stay'."

⁴¹*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 5b; 60b.

⁴²The interpretation of this term as 'coincidence' is the one given by the bKa'-brgyud-pa school of Buddhism, which follows the one given in *Pañcakrama* VI. They have criticized Tsong-kha-pa for interpreting this term as 'harmonious juxtaposition'.

⁴³*rtsa*, *rlung* and *thig-le* are terms used exclusively in mysticism. Attempts to reduce what they signify to physiological processes have failed. The *rtsa* has nothing to do with the veins or arteries or the physical body, the *rlung* is not vital air, and the *thig-le* is not a seminal drop. They may mean all this, but then, as my Lama teachers and friends told me, we move in a world of distortions.

many focal points of possible experience one can speak of several instances of potential creativity. The numerical account is of subordinate importance, because it refers to the most outstanding focal points; of paramount importance is the dynamic character, and so Padma dkar-po declares that 'the six (instances of) potential creativity are non-dichotomic motility or enlightenment-motility'.⁴⁴ In this context 'enlightenment' is another term for 'value' or 'control' and reflects the conviction that awareness is at the bottom of human nature. This awareness is not some static entity, a container of some sort, but 'motility' which refers to the noetic act which in turn in its end-state reveals a certain structure. 'Non-dichotomic' is not to be understood merely as of epistemological significance. It is a term which comprises every split, be it of subject-object or body-mind and so on. In meditation literature the basic meaning of the term 'dichotomy' (*rnam-rtog*) is rather what we would circumscribe by stating that man is divided against himself. 'Non-dichotomic' therefore refers to an experience before the split in the individual has occurred.

The formativeness of potential creativity, designated by the term 'motility', is present in that which has been formed in so far as the formed is the record of the formative process. Again we see here that there is no sharp division between the formed and the forming. This aspect is compared in the Tantric texts with water turning into ice and since ice can become water again through a process of unfreezing, we have to consider every technical term as a two-way process-product word. Another important point to note is that a new structure can only be formed when the old one is dead, not only in the realm of matter but also in that of ideas which Max Planck so admirably pointed out by saying that new ideas conquer by the death of their

These terms again point out the necessity of analytical considerations. The failure to do so has resulted in what Noel Jaquin, *The Theory of Metaphysical Influence*, p. 29, puts so admirably: "In many cases the repeated attempts to explain certain symbols in three-dimensional terms has merely succeeded in creating an entirely false concept, and one that often has no relation to the actual meaning of the symbolic representation."

⁴⁴*rDo-rje'i theg-par bgrod-pa'i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 7b.

opponents. However, there are many kinds of death. In any case, death is something more than the objective biological stoppage which can be observed from the outside. It is also an inner experience. Existentialist thinkers have directed our attention to the phenomenon of personal death, but their interpretation is more often than not linked with certain dogmas that have been taken over uncritically. The problem of death which is raised by the statement that formativeness does not come to an end when its formed frame breaks up, needs special examination and falls outside the scope of the present essay.

The twelve 'truth-indices' (*bden-don*) resemble in name the twelve members of the so-called Law of Interdependent Origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*). The latter are rather abstractions created by analysis, while the former are peculiar structural modes which are not so much fixed properties of a finished thing but relational phases of man's being.⁴⁵ Nāgārjuna is credited with having pointed out the structural nature of this 'Law', which is no 'law' at all but is a heuristic principle. He declared that the first ('ignorance', *ma-rig-pa*, *avidyā*), eighth (desire, *sred-pa*, *trṣṇā*) and ninth members (ascription-organization, *len-pa*, *upādāna*) represented 'emotionality' (*nyon-mongs-pa*, *kleśa*); the second (motivation-configuration, 'du-byed, *saṃskāraḥ*) and tenth (existence, *srid-pa*, *bhava*) 'action' (*las*, *karman*); and the remaining third (consciousness, *nam-par shes-pa*, *vi-jñāna*), fourth (name and form, *ming-gzugs*, *nāma-rūpa*), fifth (six sensory fields, *skye-mched drug*, *ṣaḍāyatana*), sixth (total pattern, 'contact', *reg-pa*, *sparsā*), seventh (feeling, *tshor-ba*, *vedanā*), eleventh (birth, *skye-ba*, *jāti*) and twelfth (old age and death, *rga-shi*, *jarāmaraṇa*) 'misery' (*sdug-bsngal*, *duḥkha*). The three topics of emotionality, action and misery are always found together so that in the absence of one the others also do not obtain. Hence they are likened to a trivet.⁴⁶ This anal-

⁴⁵In the *rDo-rje'i theg-par bgrod-pa'i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 8b it is stated that the twelve members of the *Pratītyasamutpāda* belong to the 'impure aspect' of reality (*ma-dag-pa'i cha-nas*), while the twelve truth-indices represent the 'pure aspect' (*dag-pa'i cha-nas*).

⁴⁶*bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 51b seq.

ysis by Nāgārjuna shows that the Law of Interdependent Origination has nothing to do with causality as we understand this term. While the members of the 'Law' may be said to "proceed out of each other just as do the consecutive states of an organism—say childhood, adolescence, mature age and old age,"⁴⁷ they all refer to the human situation. This situation may now be viewed from another angle. Emotionality, action and misery cover the whole of human existence and it is here that various phases of man's being can be distinguished. The first three members of the 'Law', ignorance, motivation-configuration and consciousness refer to the cognitive aspect of human life. Ignorance, as has been shown, is not absence of knowledge, it is rather the dim light of object thinking in its incipience which as a formative act finds its final form in consciousness, the discriminating activity usually moving in the subject-object dichotomy. The three topics, ignorance, motivation-configuration and consciousness, form a unity viewed under the aspects of quality (ignorance), act (motivation-configuration) and actuality (consciousness). This unitary feature is termed *ye-shes rdo-rje* (jñānavajra) which may be rendered by 'cognitive being'. It is, as Padma dkar-po points out, a status of least conflict. What he means by this remark will become clear through the relation of this mode of being to the other modes.

The next three members, name and form, the six sensory fields and the total pattern of 'contact', clearly point to the phase of man's being-in-the-world or being-in-contact-with others. It is important to note here that name and form refer to the total individual; 'name' comprises the perceptual and instinctive powers and 'form' is above all the epistemological object of a perceptual situation out of which the corporeality of things is established in co-operation with the tactile sense. It is this sense that through its experience of resistance points to something beyond the body. However, we must not assume that 'contact' relates to the tactile sense exclusively. The term 'contact' is found with other sensory perceptions as well, it even relates to

⁴⁷William S. Haas, *The Destiny of the Mind*, p. 254.

the ideational. Actually we move in a world in which our distinction between body and mind, physical and mental, material and ideal, does not obtain in such marked contrast. Moreover, while in our world-experience the sense of touch is regarded as mere receptiveness, in Tantrism the same sense interlaces man with his environment and with the physiological side of his being. Thus the triad of name and form, six sensory fields and 'contact' refer to both the inner and outer world of man. Technically this is known as *sku rdo-rje* (*kāyavajra*), which may be rendered as 'environmental being', where environment must be understood as both internal and external. The internal environment may then be likened to Cannon's principle of homeostasis. 'Environmental being' is, according to Padma dkar-po, a status of mediocre conflict.

The next triad of feeling, desire (positive as adience and negative as avoidance) and ascription, as the fitting of the experience into the total pattern of human life, is technically called *gsung rdo-rje* (*vāgvajra*) and may be rendered as 'communicative being'. Feeling is a kind of judgment; it declares that something is pleasant or unpleasant or indifferent. Naturally the tendency is to seek pleasant experiences and to avoid unpleasant ones. In this seeking man 'communicates' with his fellow beings and with the objects that surround him. He addresses them, and language as the most polished tool of communication is thus both expressive and evocative. This phase of man's being is a status of deep conflict.

The last triad of (i) existence as the realm of possibilities taking shape in (ii) the birth of a new complex phenomenon of experience which in course of time will (iii) age and die, is known as *thugs rdo-rje* (*cittavajra*). It clearly indicates man's 'situational being'. As the existentialist thinkers have shown, man is always in a situation. This being-in-a-situation is what in the Buddhist texts is termed 'existence' (*srid-pa*, *bhava*). But this is not all: man tries to solve the situation in which he finds himself, only to become involved in another one that has to be solved after solving the former in some way or other. The solution of any situation depends on man's decision which is implied in the term *thugs* (*citta*). In most cases however, he is unaware of the

decisions that have brought about his being in a situation and hence his situational being is a status of deepest conflict.⁴⁸

There is, however, another way of facing this status of conflict. Conflict and its attending pain and suffering exists as long as 'ignorance' prevails. But once man has made up his mind what he wants, he is hard to bewilder; he realizes that the situation is his and he acts in whatever situation he may find himself in the light of his possibilities and interprets the events of his life in relation to his ultimate end. In brief, he uses 'discrimination' (*shes-rab*) which reflects authentic awareness (*ye-shes*), permeating every phase of his being. On the other hand, as long as he postpones his decision and works under the spell of ignorance the more he becomes involved in conflict situations. Misery as a constitutive phase of his being increases.

While 'discriminating awareness' (*shes-rab*) is essentially an act by which mind stretches out to meet its object or, as the text says 'has a certain reference' (*dmigs-pa dang bcas-pa*),⁴⁹ it does not feel the situation in which man may find himself at the moment. And yet the feeling tone or the mood of a situation is as revealing as the cognitive aspect involved in it. This feeling tone is referred to by the 'sixteen degrees of compassion' of the text, each degree gaining in intensity and being concerned with itself rather than being a succession of events proceeding within the soul of man. As John Wild says: "It discloses the naked facticity of this situation into which I have already been thrown. But this facticity is not that of an object from which I am detached, and at which I can stare. It is an existential facticity concerned with itself and either turning back to take over its factuality, or turning away from this as a burden and a chain. For the most part, it is the latter type of feeling that predominates."⁵⁰

According to the Tantric texts, feeling, which is generally one of joy, is least intense as long as there is ordinary object think-

⁴⁸The above analysis is found in *gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 21ab.

⁴⁹*rDo-rje'i theg-par bgrod-pa'i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 8b. See also *ibid.*, fol. 57b.

⁵⁰John Wild, *The Challenge of Existentialism*, p. 87.

ing. It grows in intensity with the gradual process of de-objectification. This process is illustrated by the sexual syndrome. The first type of joy (*dga'-ba*) which comprises five degrees and is linked with the objective reference, is said to be 'small bliss'. It is present in the amorous exploration of the partner. The next type of intense joy (*mchog-dga'*) which also comprises five degrees is marked by a decrease in the intensity of the objective reference. In it the division into an I and You fades into a feeling of communion and hence is said to be 'mediocre bliss'. The third type of joy is termed variously, either as a 'special joy' (*khyad-dga'*) or as 'joylessness' (*dga'-bral*). It is a special joy because in it the division into the I and You has, as it were, completely disappeared, and it is a joyless joy, because the ordinary judgments as to the varying intensity do not apply any more. Nevertheless, this joy is said also to comprise five degrees. But since in these three types of joy there is still a latent trace of the division into an I and You, they are indices of and pointers to true joy, rather than the actual consummation which is reserved to what is called the sixteenth degree. Its name is 'co-emergence joy' (*lhan-cig-skyes-pa'i dga'-ba*), because here thought and feeling have fused into a unitary experience. This last intensity degree is rarely realized in its purity because of the presence of 'ignorance'.

With the exception of the sixteenth degree the preceding fifteen ones are related to certain focal points of experience in such a way that the first five degrees or joy (*dga'-ba*) belong to the 'head' focal point, the second five or intense joy (*mchog-dga'*) to the region between the 'throat' and 'heart' focal points, and the remaining five or special joy (*khyad-dga'*) to that between the 'heart' and 'navel' or 'sex' focal points.⁵¹ In so far as the various joys are related to the sexual syndrome and sex is, in spite of the haters of love, of paramount importance in the life of man, the following may be given as a sort of explanation. The 'head' focal point is the ordinary object thinking situation in which we take stock of the erotic possibilities the partner may have to offer or, as the texts point out, where one engages in kissing and

⁵¹*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 54b seq.

embracing or other amatory practices.⁵² Gradually the object character disappears and we find ourselves in a communicatory situation in which we put 'all our heart'. This then culminates in the convulsions after the peak of orgasm has been reached, and since it is rather difficult to differentiate between the orgasm and the subsequent convulsions one experiences either the special joy of what is considered to be the ultimate consummation or, what is the same, a state of joylessness in the sense that this joy is different from and devoid of the preceding and common types of joy.⁵³

Although the highest or sixteenth degree of intensity is realized only by him who has gone beyond 'ignorance' or objectifying thought, this does not mean that it is something utterly alien. It is present in the structure of each type of joy. Padma dkar-po says: "By dividing the four types of joy into four aspects each, one obtains sixteen degrees of joy. In this way there is the sixteenth degree, co-emergence joy, present in every joy in a subtle way. Ordinary people are unable to realize this and hence do not penetrate to its experience. The philosophers by virtue of the instruction by their Gurus realize this sixteenth degree immediately and make it the way of their philosophical quest."⁵⁴ This again emphasizes the index character of everything that we may experience in life. And it is in the immediate experience that there is co-emergence of discrimination and feeling transcending every limit of content and intensity. It has to

⁵²*Ibid.*, fol. 156b seq.

⁵³The elucidation of the various degrees of joy (*dga'-ba*) in connection with the sexual syndrome and the process of de-objectification is given in *bSre-'pho'i lam-skor-gyi thog-mar lam-dbye-bsdu*, fol. 44b seq. The distinction between orgasm as the peak of sexual activity and the spasms and convulsions as the after-effect, which A. C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin and Paul H. Gebhard have made in their *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, p. 627, is also elaborated in gNyis-med-rdo-rje's *Phyag-rgya bzhi'i man-ngag (Caturmudrā-upadeśa)*, *bsTan-'gyur* (Derge ed.), *rgyud*, vol. zhi, fol. 213ab. This text is not identical with the *Caturmudrā* in *Advaya-vajrasangraha*, pp. 32 seq. The text contained in this collection has the title *Caturmudrānīścaya* according to its Tibetan translation. Its author is Nāgārjuna(sāra).

⁵⁴*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje-'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 157a.

be noted that this feeling is not an absorption in a static and absolutized bliss, even if the texts speak of 'unchanging great bliss' (*mi-'gyur-ba bde-ba chen-po*), but the sustaining value in man's situation in the world. As compassion (*snying-rje*) it acts (*thabs*), although this action is not of the hit-and-miss type of 'ignorance'.

Finally we have to refer to the relation of coincidence (*zung-'jug*) between 'discriminating awareness' (*shes-rab*) and 'compassion' (*snying-rje*), between 'lucidity' (*gsal*) and 'profoundness' (*zab*), or whatever other symbol may be used.⁵⁵ Coincidence having the formal property of identity as a relation always involves an aspect of duality, which is nevertheless transcended in some way. It seems that this relation cannot be analyzed further. It belongs to our being to be thus disclosed to ourselves. For in actual life feeling and discrimination, sense and reason, never work separately, but always in combination.

Discrimination and feeling—to mention only the most outstanding aspects—form an existential unity, which is presupposed by all later action and theoretical reflection. This existential unity is designated by the term 'foundation-Mahāmudrā' (*gzhi phyag-rgya chen-po*).⁵⁶ Because of the unity of reality this foundation is also the path (*lam*) and the goal (*'bras-bu*) which, as we have seen, in a certain way determines and controls the foundation and the action built on it. In other words, the successive incidental differences of a continuous process are transcended by its essential unity. Therefore we can refer to its unity from beginning to end. To preserve this unity at every stage of one's life becomes the philosopher's task.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, fol. 188a. See also *rNal-'byor-bzhi'i bshad-pa don-dam mdzud tshugs-su bstan-pa*, fol. 10b.

⁵⁶*gZhung-'grel rdo-rje 'chang-gi dgongs-pa gsal-bar byed-pa*, fol. 58b; *rDo-rje'i theg-par bgrod-pa'i shing-rta chen-po*, fol. 8b; *Phyag-rgya chen-po rnal-'byor bzhi'i bshad-pa nges-don lta-ba'i mig*, fol. 2a.

