

**THE RDZOGS-CHEN DISTINCTION
BETWEEN MENTATION AND EXCITATORY INTELLIGENCE**

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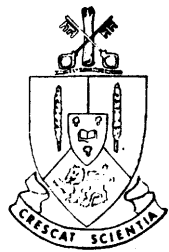
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ABSTRACT

The rDzogs-chen thinkers of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition are unique in presenting a highly developed account of mind and intelligence that remains grounded in experience while avoiding the pitfalls of reductionism. This study focuses on a distinction, important for understanding the rDzogs-chen contribution, between mentation (sems) and excitatory intelligence (rig-pa). Mentation refers to the non-optimal operations in which the experiential field becomes structured into the subjective grasping of projects that elicit interest. It is marked by the repetition of habitual patterns and by a dimming of the cognitive potential. Excitatory intelligence, on the other hand, involves an optimizing energy that restores the fluidity to experience. Here the dynamics of evolutionary change are accessed. To set the stage for a discussion of the rDzogs-chen contributions to the understanding of mind, an account of the philosophical debate amongst the Buddhist schools of philosophy is first presented.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a study of the insights of a little-known tradition of Tibetan Buddhism concerning mind and experience. A striking feature of current research, both in the humanities and sciences, is the breakdown of the traditional account of mind and the resulting uncertainty regarding the role of experience within nature. Experience is commonly conceptualized as something that occurs within the mind. Experience is always experience "of"; either experience of the objects thought to make up the world or experience of physiological processes occurring within the body. How is mind and ultimately experience to be related to the "objects" that are experienced? The philosophical literature shows the myriad of problems this mind/body dualism presents. In this context a study of the insights of the rDzogs-chen tradition is presented. This tradition offers a novel perspective on the problem of mind and experience from a perspective independent of the "Western" philosophical tradition.

In contrast to many of the modern solutions that address the problem of mind/body dualism by incorporating mind and experience within a materialistic framework, rDzogs-chen maintained a position that rejected both the materialistic and idealist extremes. rDzogs-chen thinking can be characterized by a focus on experience and a concerted opposition to any form of reductionism. The use of the term "experience" will have to be clarified in the next chapter. As will be shown, experience is usually judged to be an internal experience of some-thing. In contrast, rDzogs-chen

thinkers focused on "how" experience operates as a dynamic process. According to the commonly accepted view, minds are thought to have experience which is "of" or about objects that are separate and outside of the mind. Buddhist philosophers carefully refuted a variety of theses that suggest objects have independent existence. Objects are regarded as only a concretization out of the experiential field occurring as the result of operations that move away from ordinary experience.

rDzogs-chen thinkers would consider the dualistic model as a valid description of a certain limited domain of operations. The model describes what might be called "ordinary" operations within experience. These ordinary operations are understood in terms of the attachments and aversions to various projects that are assumed to have a "real" status. According to the rDzogs-chen tradition, the "ordinary" operations of mind are the result of a dividing up of the wider experiential field. Experience actually is prior to the splitting of the experiential field into objective and subjective components. Any model of mind which is based upon the ordinary dualistic operations fails to include the wider experiential field and is therefore incomplete. According to the rDzogs-chen viewpoint, the commonly accepted model of mind only describes the relatively low levels of mental operations (sems) and is derivative from the wider experiential field, which, it is claimed, can be accessed thereby restoring the openness and freedom of experience. rDzogs-chen thinkers suggested that it is of particular importance to fully comprehend the distinction between low level operations and intensified excitatory intelligence (rig-pa). Excitatory intelligence reflects the full range of the dynamics of experience which is free from the concretizing and grasping of ordinary intelligence. Excitatory intelligence is the energizing thrust that allows beings to transcend their

limited structure cycles and emerge into new dynamic regimes of meaningfulness. The distinction between the low level operation termed "mentation" (sems) and the optimal excitatory intelligence (rig-pa) is a unique contribution of rDzogs-chen thinking and shows how rDzogs-chen thinking went beyond the results of other Buddhist traditions.

The introductory chapter will discuss the historical situatedness of the rDzogs-chen tradition and suggest some of the distinguishing characteristics of the rDzogs-chen approach of Buddhism. The particular focus of our investigations is a text composed by 'Jigs-med gling-pa, the Yon-tan mdzod¹, which presents an overview of the Buddhist search for meaningful being. The introductory chapter will conclude with a discussion of the problems inherent in translating and understanding Buddhist texts. It is significant that in the field of Buddhist studies there have been many translations of texts yet, to my knowledge, there is only one study that addresses the problem of translation.² This discussion will defend the choice of a "hermeneutic" approach.

A) Setting of the Problem

Western scholars of Buddhism have widely assumed that Tibetans were primarily passive recipients of ideas that originated elsewhere. Early study of Tibetan texts was motivated by an interest in translations of Sanskrit texts no longer available in the original. This focus, combined with the insistence from the Tibetan theocracy on "authenticity" (which meant that all "authoritative" texts had to be traced back to an Indian original) has resulted in a one-sided view of indigenous contributions. No less an authority than Giuseppe Tucci has declared:

The (Indian) pattern (Tibetans) willfully choose and follow with ruthless discipline allows them no freedom of choice, no sally or brainwave: everything is calculated, measured, dosed in such a fashion, that all sparks of genius, had there been any, would have been dampened and smothered.³

A closer examination of the voluminous literature of Tibet shows that this is not the case. Instead we find texts demonstrating that Tibetan authors responded to the stimulation of Buddhist ideas in a sensitive and creative manner producing literature that had no parallel in "original" sources.

The rDzogs-chen school of Tibetan Buddhism was particularly innovative in developing a holistic, process approach to central questions of being and intelligence. rDzogs-chen thinking can be traced to the earliest contacts of Buddhism with Tibet. According to traditional authority the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet was associated with King Srong-bstan-sgam-po (died 649), who dispatched his minister Thon-mi-sambhota to Kashmir in

632 to study Sanskrit grammar in order to create a written language and grammar for Tibet⁴. However there is evidence to suggest that the date of the first Tibetan encounter with Buddhism can be traced back much earlier. While these dates cannot be fixed with much accuracy, rDzogs-chen thinking traces its history back to a person named Sri Singha who lived at least 300 years earlier than the official dates of the first diffusion⁵. Indeed the first person associated with the rDzogs-chen tradition was dGa'-rab rdo-rje who may have lived as early as 52 A.D.⁶

The rDzogs-chen tradition is usually considered to be part of the rNying-ma or "ancient" lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The term rNying-ma only arose after what is termed the "second" diffusion of Buddhism during which Atisa, who came to Tibet in 1042, instituted a series of reforms.⁷ These reforms placed a greater emphasis on monastic discipline and adherence to the logic and epistemology based elements of the Indian tradition. Atisa's reforms left the ontologically oriented Vajrayana teachings for only a select few. In addition, a kind of fundamentalism arose that suggested that only Indian texts contained the authentic teachings of Buddhism, and resulted in the strange practice of concocting "Sanskrit" titles for indigenous texts, adding to the confusion concerning Tibetan literature. In the eleventh century the translator Rin-chen bzang-po instituted a new method of interpreting and translating Sanskrit texts, which was intended to standardize texts and come closer to the originals. With this new approach came a tendency to ignore and even sometimes suppress the "old" school, which was accused of deviating from the "original" teachings.

While rDzogs-chen thinkers were often associated with rNying-ma monasteries and centers of learning (see Figure 1), it is perhaps more accurate to say that the life of rDzogs-chen thinking continued in individuals

who kept alive a questioning process in which meaning was not reduced to a set of texts or doctrinal tenets that were fixed and passed down to later generations. It is perhaps because of its "unsettling" effect that rDzogs-chen thinking did not lend itself to institutionalization. Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa, perhaps the most encompassing and original of the rDzogs-chen thinkers, gave up monastic life and preferred to keep to himself and his work. In addition rDzogs-chen philosophy had a non-sectarian quality such that even great dGe-lugs-pa masters of the "new" traditions such as the Fifth Dalai Lama declared themselves to be adherents. This non-sectarian approach was emphasized by the Eclectic movement of the 19th century by 'Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-brtse (1820- 1892) and Kong-sprul Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (1811- 1899).⁸ In general we might say that rDzogs-chen thinkers were not content to merely imitate or repeat what they heard, but rather approached the Buddhist impetus as a challenging presence that elicits a response. As such they were independent thinkers who sought to understand Buddhist ideas as they related to the matrix of their lived concern.

rDzogs-chen thinking can be characterized by two trends, which, although present in other Buddhist traditions, were developed to their fullest degree in the rDzogs-chen tradition.⁹ First is the emphasis on what might be termed the evolutionary thrust and second, the focus on an ontological versus ontic understanding of being. The first focus is characteristic of the Buddhist tradition from its inception, though rDzogs-chen thinkers can be credited with bringing out the full implications of this idea.¹⁰ From the beginning Buddhism was concerned with transcending human limitations, such as emotional complexes and intellectual obscurations, and reaching the "other side". This "other side" was variously described as nirvana, being free from limitations, offering unrestricted range of insight, etc. Early

formulations often conceived of the "goal" as a special state or attainment, and often this amounted to a kind of "escape".

With later developments in Buddhist thinking the path became seen as an unfoldment of potential rather than an escape. The new ideal became the Bodhisattva who transcended his merely selfish concerns to work for the benefit of all beings. The paradigm shifted to one of evolution in which the self-organizing dynamics of change were emphasized. In the rDzogs-chen tradition the focus on self-organization and the emphasis on a dynamic viewpoint was brought out in its fullest implications. While the Yogacara school of Buddhism had moved towards this dynamic conception, they failed to account for the possibility of structural change in which new dynamic regimes could evolve. rDzogs-chen thinkers developed ways of conceiving of the intricate and complicated operations of self-organizing systems in terms of a hierarchical order. Within this conception was imbedded the insight that higher orders of complexity involved integration and interpenetration.

From their earliest contact with Buddhism, Tibetan thinkers were attracted to the idea of the evolutionary movement in which new regimes of wholeness and integrity are attained. This is evidenced in the translation of the Sanskrit term buddha, a descriptive term for a qualitative state of being characterized as being fully awake. Tibetans saw this term as expressing evolutionary dynamics and chose the term sangs-rgyas which describes a dynamic process in which all negative obscurations are gone (sangs) and all positive qualities have expanded (rgyas). Modern scholars have compared this characterization to that of a dissipative structure, a term coined by Nobel prize winning chemist Ilya Prigogine to describe how new dynamic regimes may originate from non-equilibrium conditions.¹¹ These process structures emerge from conditions in which entropy is "dissipated" (sangs)

and a "new" order of higher complexity is instantiated (rgyas). In this dynamic notion the problem of change or growth is answered. This insight was an advance over the earlier Buddhist philosophical systems, generally arising within the Indian context. The Yogacara thinkers, who most strongly prepared the line of questioning out of which this insight emerged, themselves failed to account for the possibility of radical change and could only think in terms of the transformation of a basic entity not the radical metamorphosis in which new dynamic regimes are reached.

The concern with evolutionary dynamics is further illustrated in the translation made of two very important terms in Buddhist thinking: bodhi and bodhicitta, which were translated as byang-chub and byang-chub-kyi-sems, respectively¹². A common English translation of the Sanskrit term bodhi is "enlightenment"¹³. This translation fails to indicate the dynamic process that Tibetans came to understand which was certainly more than just a blissful end-state. The Tibetan understanding of the terms bodhi and bodhicitta (often translated as "thought of enlightenment") has nothing of the static connotations implied by some interpreters still trapped in the theories of 18th and 19th century rationalism. Vimalamitra, who is considered to be one of the most important early rDzogs-chen thinkers, elaborates on byang-chub-sems as such:

"byang", the clearing of emotions with their habitual tendencies.
"chub", the consummateness of the meaning-rich gestalt's system dynamics.
"sems", invariant and without defects
Its greatness, the highest endogenous pristine cognitiveness,
Therefore this is called "byang-chub-sems".¹⁴

In the term byang-chub-sems we can detect the combination of two operations into one dynamic process. On the one hand byang is characterized as the clearing away of emotional obscurations that result in habitual patterns. These emotional attachments and reactions serve to keep the system within certain parameters of operation described as habitual tendencies. Chub, on the other hand, suggests a granting of meaning and the optimal operation of the system as a whole, as pristine cognitiveness. Unlike the habitual patterns of emotional reactivity, pristine cognition (here the term could refer to cognitions or the process of cognition) is ever fresh in revealing new perspectives. In this sense the freshness and newness of cognition is not vitiated in any way. Combining these ideas produces a dynamic notion, again analogous to a dissipative structure, in which entropy is dissipated and a new hierarchical order emerges. This is a dynamic process in which two different notions, the purifying aspect and the consummate thereness aspect, are fused into one dynamic process. The term sems suggests an intention towards this process, which is unchanging and without any defects.

It follows from this conception of byang-chub-sems, which we translate as "intention towards pure and consummate presence", that the concern of rDzogs-chen thinkers was not model-building. Instead rDzogs-chen thinking was concerned with processes in which growth and evolution occur rather than with some model of "reality", "universe" or "being" that human subjectivity then fits within. This concern is aligned with the second characteristic that has been attributed to rDzogs-chen thinking, namely the ontological focus. This focus can be characterized as the movement away from attempting to account for reality in terms of "entities" or even "processes" that can be delimited towards the asking of the question of the

meaning of being. It is the very fact of the openness of being that allows entities to appear in their "thing-like" character. Thus Being (capitalized merely to distinguish this term from the ontic sense in which we speak of "beings") has a priority which in some sense encompasses and allows for encountering "things". In rDzogs-chen thinking the concern is with Being in its wholeness, thus this approach is termed "absolute completeness" (rDzogs-chen). This tradition, according to Guenther, "regards all partial perspectives as but local and temporal fluctuations within the atemporally abiding, non-localizable mystery that is Being as such"¹⁵.

In Western perspective it was Heidegger who in our century opened up the question of Being, which became the guiding thread throughout his thinking. Heidegger saw that in the metaphysical trend in philosophy the larger question of Being had become obscured. Indeed the tendency to restrict discussion to an ontic level in which everything is treated as some type of "thing" that can be identified and described leaves little room for the questioning of Being to occur. Metaphysics is characterized as an effort to give an account of what there is in the universe and what it is like. As Schrag has stated: "in a sense the history of metaphysics could be understood as the history of the categories of substance and causality"¹⁶. This metaphysical approach is similar to the approach found in schools of Indian Buddhist philosophy that focus on how we know. However both the metaphysical and epistemological trends remain oblivious to the important question of the wider implications of Being. For example this questioning might ask how it is that entities appear in their thing-like manner or what it means to be. The ontological concern is based on the concrete experience of being- in-the-world and involves a return to the dynamic field of experience from which the concern with individual entities arises.

Our investigation of the distinction between excitatory intelligence (rig-pa) and mentation (sems) will centre on a commentary by Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (Nineteenth century)¹⁷ on 'Jigs-med gling-pa's (1730-1798) influential work the Yon-tan rin-po-che'i mdzod¹⁸ (hereafter abbreviated as Yon-tan mdzod). This highly regarded text of the rNying-ma tradition presents a comprehensive overview explaining the main thrust of the Buddhist enterprise and is, in addition, also regarded as an important introduction to rDzogs-chen thinking. The Yon-tan mdzod consists of a primary text written in verse and a longer interlinear commentary explicating its meaning. Often the commentary is needed to make full sense of the primary verses. The original commentary by 'Jigs-med gling-pa incorporates the primary verses by dividing them into units of lines bearing on a common theme and then by singling out the component words and phrases for explication. Yon-tan rgya-mtsho's commentary is divided according to a structural analysis (sa-bcad) of the original verses written by his teacher dPal-sprul 'Jigs-med-chos-kyi- dbang-po (born 1808)¹⁹ and incorporates the root text into the commentary. We have focused primarily on the commentary of Yon-tan rgya-mtsho as it is often clearer and more helpful in clarifying key points.

Both Yon-tan rgya-mtsho and 'Jigs-med gling-pa appear at a relatively late period in the development of rDzogs-chen thinking²⁰. Indeed 'Jigs-med gling-pa was concerned that these teachings might disappear and through his writings attempted to consolidate and preserve the important ideas of this tradition. The Yon-tan mdzod does not express original ideas as much as sum up and preserve the insights of a tradition already established and in danger of disappearing. 'Jigs-med gling-pa was strongly influenced by the writings of perhaps the seminal figure of the rDzogs-chen tradition, Klong-

chen rab-'byams-pa (1308-1364). This influence is directly reflected in the Yon-tan mdzod, a work modelled after the Sems-nyid Ngal-gso of Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa²¹. The distinction between ordinary mentation and excitatory intelligence is discussed in the twelfth chapter of the Yon-tan mdzod in which the rDzogs-chen approach is detailed.

B) The Hermeneutic Approach.

Approaching the reputed insights of another tradition raises the problem of translation. How can a translator know if a translation captures the uniqueness of the work that is being translated rather than merely transforming it into something else through the categories and structures of his own conceptual network. This problem is not unique to the study of texts from other periods or cultures. Instead the problem of translation is intimately connected with the wider issue of understanding.²² Hermeneutics is concerned with coming to understand new meaning, and in particular, with the problem of bridging the gap between the familiar world and the "alien" meanings that await understanding. It is not limited to the philosophical arena but shows up in other approaches as well. In general we might say that the "hermeneutic" approach is founded on the recognition that we cannot divorce phenomena from our way of approaching and understanding them.

In Western philosophy, hermeneutic thinkers, like Heidegger and Gadamer, have suggested that in approaching the insights of a tradition, we find ourselves already embedded in the horizons of a familiar world. These horizons of the interpreter's world, while usually not themselves the object of investigation, indeed constitute an essential precondition for any understanding to occur. This "hermeneutic circle" illustrates the dilemma that all interpretation and understanding presuppose, what Heidegger called, the "fore-structure"²³ of understanding. Instead of treating the fore-structure as a problem that must be overcome in the act of understanding or as a limitation placed upon understanding, Heidegger viewed it as a positive fact that grounds the act of knowing.

In Being and Time, Heidegger established the priority of "dasein" as the unique entity that exists and also has an understanding of what it means to exist. Dasein is always found as being in the world, which is not a static container having determinable content, but a horizon of intentions that already determines how things will be present. "Having" a world is a characteristic of Dasein's being. Dasein is thus distinguished from the objects that appear in the world but cannot be said to "have" a world. The "fore-structure" of understanding indicates the positive fact of Dasein's comprehension of being, not as a fixed or final product, but as part of the ongoing history of being-in-the-world²⁴. Accordingly, the hermeneutic circle is not so much a closed circle as a spiral. Understanding is based in existence and operates as the interplay of the fore-structure of understanding and the subject matter itself²⁵.

Gadamer has suggested the metaphor of a conversation to describe the hermeneutical process and has described a conversation as the fusion of horizons²⁶. On one side we have the horizon of the interpreter, not as a personal horizon, but rather "more as a meaning and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one's own what is said in the text"²⁷. The other side is the horizon of the text, not as a container of some pre-established meaning, but as a challenging presence that elicits and draws the response and concern of the reader.

This whole process also presupposes that in order for understanding to occur, reputed insights must be accessible through experience. From the beginning, Buddhist authors have stated that claims must be confirmed by experience. The Buddhist impetus towards realizing the fullness of being is only maintained when individuals experience and embody this fundamental

concern²⁸. The emphasis on experience can be traced to the historical Sakyamuni Buddha who, as A. K. Warder wrote:

...rejected all authority except experience:
the student should experiment for himself
and see that the teaching is true, not accept
it because the Buddha says so.²⁹

The denial that authority can provide reliable knowledge precludes Buddhism from being included in the ordinary classification scheme of "religions", since Buddhism does not claim that religious knowledge emanates from a transcendental realm divorced from human experience. In general we might regard Buddhism as an empiricism if there were not the association of this term with the philosophy known as "Empiricism".³⁰

While understanding must appeal to experience, the notion of "experience" is equally open to questioning and examination. F.S.C. Northrop suggested that there is a general tendency in the West to restrict experience, certainly when talking of philosophical or scientific matters, to the thematic, or to what Northrop calls the "differentiated aesthetic continuum"³¹. What is rational is what can be circumscribed, separated out and measured. With Eastern thinking, however, great value and acceptance is placed on the "undifferentiated aesthetic continuum". The nature of experience itself must be questioned. As Gadamer has stated, "understanding does not occur when we try to intercept what someone wants to say to us by claiming we already know it"³².

Nineteenth century empiricism may have suggested that experience is a purely neutral term, but this term is as much rooted in pre-judgement as is any other concept. In this regard Buddhist thinking has been more closely

akin to the phenomenological attitude, which places the naturalistic-objectivistic attitude in brackets. However there are two general interpretations of the phenomenological attitude that must be distinguished. The first sees phenomenology as the attempt to determine "experience" in terms of the constitutive aspect of the intentional arch, tending towards a type of "idealism" in which a transcendental subject emerges along with "the things themselves". Whether or not Husserl himself falls into this interpretation cannot be dealt with here; suffice it to say that this is a common interpretation, usually developed by those who reject the phenomenological approach.

The second interpretation of "phenomenology" sees the phenomenological approach as a necessary corollary to the hermeneutic project. Phenomenology, as Heidegger suggested, is presupposed by the hermeneutic project. To allow for the self-showing of beings to occur, such that beings emerge in their thing-like aspect, an opening must be possible. The bracketing of the naturalistic-objectivistic attitude can be delineated as a suspension of sedimented ways of taking up projects that allows an opening so that meaning can arise in a free and spontaneous manner. Phenomenology, at least as Heidegger sees it, is a choice in favour of meaning. If consciousness is consciousness of, and if it is meaning, not things, that consciousness is most immediately concerned with, then phenomenology presupposes the hermeneutical choice of meaning. The choice of meaning, as Ricoeur termed it, does not imply idealism. He stated:

That consciousness is outside of itself, that it is towards meaning before meaning is for it and, above all, before consciousness is for

itself. is this not what the central discovery
of phenomenology implies?³³

The rDzogs-chen approach puts great value on the opening up of the field of experience and the encounter with fresh meanings. However this does not call into question the great instrumental value of conceptual or convention ways of knowing. Upholding the value of openness might seem to involve devaluation of conceptual knowledge. But this hasty conclusion fails to appreciate that the criticism of conceptual knowledge is only meant to allow for the openness in which new meanings can arise. This is stated negatively by insisting that openness cannot be hindered by the limitations of acquired conceptual infrastructure and the outlines of tacit understanding. Neither is openness served by treating what is said only in terms of one set of linguistic formulae to be mapped onto another. An honest attempt at understanding, according to Heidegger, is a confrontation with "otherness" and the leap into the belonging- togetherness of Man and Being:

It is not until the entry into the sphere of
the mutual assignation is effected that
thought experience becomes attuned to it
and determined.³⁴

In this regard, the rDzogs-chen tradition has anticipated Heidegger's famous "turn" that can be seen as a deepening of the original question of the meaning of Being, which in Being and Time takes Dasein as its focus of questioning, to an attempt to think Being in its wholeness. To anticipate the conclusion that will follow; mentation (sems) remains on the ontic level

involved with entities and relations, while excitatory intelligence (rig- pa) is the recovery of the openness and radiance of intelligence in its unrestricted range of operation.

CHAPTER TWO

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

A) Introduction to the Problem of Mind

In order to present the unique contributions of rDzogs-chen thinkers, it is necessary to show how the understanding of mind developed in the four schools of Buddhist philosophy. This critical account of Buddhist philosophy will be complimented by a discussion of the problem of mind as it is understood, explicitly or tacitly, by contemporary Western thinkers. The focus on contemporary thinking is motivated by hermeneutic concerns. The horizon of understanding upon which a genuine meeting with another tradition can take place cannot be treated as transparent. In the concrete act of translation, the translator should occupy a mediating position exposing the prejudgments of one side to the logic of the subject matter discussed on the other and vice versa.

The term mind is used with reservation because of the manifold problems its usage presents. The resulting confusion has been delineated in detail by modern philosophers, yet a consensus on how to solve these difficulties is not forthcoming. Neither can psychology be of much help here. Psychologists readily admit that there is no widely accepted definition of mind.³⁵ Simply disregarding or criticizing the usage of the term will not help to clarify the issues involved. Instead this thesis will draw upon and

clarify insights regarding mind and "experience" while recognizing the difficulties these terms often present. Addressing these difficulties necessitates entering the contemporary debate as the discussion warrants. In addition it may prove helpful to draw on directions in modern thinking that parallel or assist in bringing out the insights of rDzogs-chen thinkers.

An additional cautionary note is necessary regarding the "fixity" of the translation of the Tibetan term sems. This term may take on different connotations depending upon the particular approach different schools or traditions take. To address this problem we have translated the term sems according to context. While this policy involves some added complications, it would be misleading to suggest that sems has had a constant understanding throughout the development of Buddhist thinking. To maintain that a term has had a fixed meaning within a "school" of Buddhist philosophy is a simplification. As Guenther has pointed out, Eastern thinking is bereft of a term that might correspond to the Western term "philosophy".³⁶ The Tibetan term grub-mtha', which has been translated as "school of philosophy", actually means to come to the end (mtha') of one's looking and set the results down (grub). According to many of the most creative Buddhist thinkers, there is no limitation to going on and seeing something new.

B) Early Buddhist Theories of Mind

The earliest attempts to synthesize and set out in coherent form the insights regarding mind (citta, sems) occurs in what is known as the Vaibhāṣika system. Vaibhāṣika thinkers analyzed reality by distinguishing the various kinds of elements thought to comprise it³⁷. They were phenomenologists who held that experience and reality value are synonymous. The elements of which they spoke were not considered to have a reality independent of experience. But what of the reality of something not experienced, like a dog shut in the next room? If we do not experience a dog, its reality, like the very possibility of our experiencing it, is not given. The elements that the Vaibhāṣikas dealt with were not considered in terms of the Western notion of substance, a concept based on the distinction between "things" and their "properties". Instead the Vaibhāṣikas attempted a neutral descriptive approach that described these elements of reality in terms of what is directly present, which in some cases is a quality, sometimes a feeling tone. The Vaibhāṣikas claimed that their analysis included everything in the experiential field and, therefore, all aspects of reality.

These existents are distinguished on the basis of whether they are considered to be transitory or permanent. Most of the existents are transitory events, arising through and dependent on causal patterning. The three absolutes³⁸ are a special group of existents that would seem to contradict the general Buddhist insistence on transitoriness. The "absolutes" are necessary to account for a fundamental assumption of Buddhist thinking, namely that it is possible to escape the causally patterned confines of samsara. This possibility, like all other elements of reality, must "exist" and

since it is not dependent on a causal nexus, it must be an absolutely existing element. This possibility of freedom was thought to include the possible cessation of samsara due to insight as well as the possible cessation independent of such insight. It seems that with this second absolute Buddhist thinkers recognized that the possibility of transcending one's limited world had an independence from any particular "insight" and could exert an influence "independently". The third absolute is spaciousness, which has been described as the meaningful horizon of Being and is closely related to the encounter with the other two absolutely existing elements³⁹.

Within the Vaibhāṣika analysis sems (here "mind" is appropriate) is considered as a dominant or primary factor in consciousness. Although mind is considered as an existent, it is an aggregate of skandhas: a transitory conjunction of functions rather than some kind of substance assumed to have duration and independence. Functional relatedness gives the impression of continuity and leads to the tendency to posit a "self", without contradicting the experience of transitoriness. Mind (sems) can further be analyzed in terms of various mental events. Five of these are considered to be ever-present; being in contact (reg-pa) with a perceptual situation, relating the contents of this situation to a "centre" or "ego" (yid la byed-pa), the feeling-tone of a situation (tshor-ba), conceptualization which deals with specific aspects of the objective situation ('du-shes), and the overall directionality of mind, similar to the notion of intentionality (sems-pa)⁴⁰. There are forty-six other mental events, ranging from attention to rage and decorum. These mental events may or may not be present in cognitive situations.⁴¹

In summary the Vaibhāṣika account analyzed reality in terms of individual existents or elements that somehow came in contact with one

another. Sems, which we translate here as "mind", stands for a central event that is accorded a primary position in terms of being the organizing nexus around which other cognitive events are grouped. Furthermore, this event is somehow able to come into contact with other "elements" of reality.

Although mind is considered as the primary factor in consciousness, it is still analyzed in terms of building blocks. The Sautrāntikas were to point out this shortcoming: how could knowledge result from the contact of individual elements, each of which has its own distinct character, and further, how could this divergent collection of events come together and form what we experience as a unified situation?

Already in Vasubandhu's summary of this early scholastic tradition is a trend moving away from thinking in terms of entities and towards conceiving of the mental as a processing having various phases. In the Abhidharmakośa, a work which can be interpreted as representing a Sautrāntika viewpoint of the Vaibhāsika system, mind and mental events are not taken as discrete existents:

Mind (sems) and mental events (sems-
byung) necessarily occur together.⁴²

This tendency to reject the entitative approach for a more process structure one is further born out in the re-interpretation of the Sanskrit terms citta (sems), manas (vid) and vijñāna (rnam-par shes-pa), which the earlier Buddhists conceived of as different entities. In the Abhidharmakośa these "elements" are now said to distinguish different phases in the processing termed mind/mentation.⁴³ Mind (citta, sems) is characterized as a "reaching out for" or "being ready for" process.⁴⁴ Guenther has suggested

that mind can be seen as a feedback, feed-forward process that is both responsive and creative.⁴⁵ Because of this "subjective" connotation, we might say that sems can be described as an attitude. Yid (manas), as the next important phase in the cognitive processing, is the synthesizing agency that might be termed the subjective disposition. It is also described as the "meeting place" where the data brought by the senses and the interpreting and patterning of the subject are brought together.⁴⁶ Rnam-par shes-pa (vijñāna) is that agency whereby distinct cognitive judgments are made. Implied in this operation is a splitting up of the cognitive gestalt and a singling out of particular aspects, such that a distinct cognitive judgement can be made.

C) The Yogācāra Innovation

With Yogācāra thinkers the emphasis on the process character of mind, noted by the Sautrāntika school, was developed to its logical conclusion and a radically new conception of mind and world was created. This innovation was of key importance in leading into rDzogs-chen thinking. Mi-pham (1846-1914) summed up the thrust of the Yogācāra position as:

all elements of reality are subsumed under sems alone. That which has ultimate validity is the cognitive event devoid of both subjective grasping and objective determination.⁴⁷

We have left sems untranslated in the preceding quotation. While "mind" has been an adequate translation of this term up until now, at this point in the development of Buddhist thinking the common translation breaks down.

According to Yogācāra thinkers the notion of sems must be broadened to include both subject and object poles of experience. Phenomenological philosophers have shown that a careful description of experience reveals that every cognitive situation has both a noetic pole, that is a mode of experiencing, as well as a noematic pole, that is a "something" experienced.⁴⁸ Within the context of Yogācāra philosophy it may be more appropriate to translate sems as "experience", with the proviso that experience includes both noetic and noematic poles. Yogācāra thinkers saw that ordinary experience is continually structured in terms of our projects at hand (gzung), which we take up or apprehend in a certain way depending upon subjective demands ('dzin). There is not a duality of subject and object but rather two

intentional poles that belong together and actually even presuppose each other. Tibetan thinkers used the compound term "gzung-dzin" to refer to the structure of ordinary experience: "gzung" meaning literally "apprehendable" or that which elicits interest and "dzin" the act of seizing or grasping.⁴⁹ Taken together, the two terms describe the bipolar nature of experience, indicating a complementarity in which there is an act of apprehending as well as that which elicits interest.

The interdependence of the subjective and objective poles of experience has been brought out by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

The positing of the object therefore makes us go beyond the limits of our actual experience which is brought up against and halted by an alien being, with the result that finally experience believes that it extracts all its own teaching from the object. (...) The whole life of consciousness is characterized by the tendency to posit objects, since it is consciousness, that is to say self-knowledge, only in so far as it takes hold of itself and draws itself together in an identifiable object. And yet the absolute positing of a single object is the death of consciousness, since it congeals the whole of existence, as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it.⁵⁰

While Merleau-Ponty stressed that the whole life of consciousness can be characterized as the tendency to posit objects, he also stressed that the positing of a single object results in the congealing of the field of experience. While experience is intentional it is a fluid process of

apprehending/elicitation, which can become fixated on particular "objects". This fixation, as Merleau-Ponty stated, "kills" the very life of consciousness by the positing of a definite object.

For Buddhist thinkers the grasping of "objects" introduces a kind of concretization into the fluidity of experience. Once the product of this operation is taken as a solid object it gathers around it all sorts of attachments and aversions. The repetition of such a concretization with the attendant emotional complexes results in habitual tendencies (bag-chags), which when suitably stimulated in the appropriate circumstances, reassert themselves as the habits and routines of ordinary experience. This diverts energy and attention away from what is spontaneously given (lhun-grub) and leads to a straying from the immediacy of the experiential field into the opaque, structure-bound nature of everyday concern. Yogācāra thinkers considered much of experience, which includes the outline of our world as well as specific aspects, to be the result of such a process, summed up under the term kun-gzhi, the Tibetan rendering of the Sanskrit alaya-vijñāna⁵¹.

The Yogācāra system is also called Cittamatra (sems-tsam), a term that draws attention to "citta", the Sanskrit term for sems, as being that alone (tsam) which is most important. At this point we can translate sems as "experience" and interpret sems-tsam as an insistence that it is experience alone that matters. Indeed although the Yogācāra system is often termed "mentalism" or even "idealism", it would be more accurate to characterize this movement of thinking as a return to the openness of experience. Yogācāra thinkers insisted that experience alone matters both in terms of correctly analyzing the human problem situation and also in forming the ground upon which any experimenting with overcoming these problems happens.

The focus on the primacy of experience is a suspension of the usual objectivistic tendency to divide up "the world" into elements that are assumed to be either mental or physical. We must be careful to acknowledge that the return to experience does not prejudge experience as a "mental" phenomenon as contrasted with "objects". An "idealistic" interpretation of experience in which there are only mental processes would only be a choice of one type of entity (namely mental process or "ideas") over another (possibly physical entities). This position would remain within the overall subject/object dichotomy that the Yogācāra system opposed. Instead we might consider the Yogācāra view as a kind of realism in the sense that Yogācāra thinkers insisted on remaining within a rigorous analysis of experience itself and insisted that speaking of "objects" as though they were somehow already "objectively" given is already to prejudice the inquiry.

On the face of it, the objectivity of the "external world" seems to be one of our strongest and most confidently held beliefs. The corollaries of the "objectivist" theory that most concerns us here is the separation of the mental and the physical realms, the problem of the mind and the body. Not only is this position explicitly maintained by many philosophers and scientists, it also falls within a background of tacit knowledge within the Western tradition. In coming to terms with the insights suggested by Yogācāra and rDzogs-chen thinkers, this is probably one of the most difficult pre-judgments⁵² to surmount. This is the theory of the "two worlds" in which the Mental world is characterized as being internal, subjective and transparent to experience, while the Physical world is characterized as being external, objective and only problematically related to experience.

The severance of the mental and the physical realm has never been accepted by Buddhist thinkers. While it is certainly true that the early Vaibhāṣika school of philosophy analyzed existence in terms of different entities, there was not the same distinction between the mental and the physical. According to the Vaibhāṣikas the physical-material is said to comprise both the sense objects (colour, sound, fragrance, taste, touch) as well as the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, bodily feelings); both sides of the alleged mental/physical split.

The origins of the mind/body problem in the West are often traced back to seventeenth century philosophers like Locke, but especially Descartes. According to Wallace Matson, the Greek philosophers had no way to divide the events of the "inner" world, understood as states of consciousness, from events in the external world⁵³. This was later supplied through the notion of "idea", which became the key term in the philosophy of John Locke who defined it as "... whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks".⁵⁴ The next step is inevitable; how can there be valid knowledge of anything "outside" of "ideas" and their relationships?

Descartes in the inquiries attempted to meet this skepticism head on. It is significant, however, that even the rules that guide his critical method contain a model of mind as the internal forum in which "objects" present themselves:

The first (of four rules) was to accept nothing as true which I did not evidently know to be such, that is to say, scrupulously to avoid precipitance and prejudice, and in the judgments I passed to include nothing additional to what had presented itself to

my mind so clearly and so distinctly that I could have no occasion for doubting it (underlining is mine).⁵⁵

We are left with the central problem of Cartesian epistemology: how can certain knowledge be guaranteed if the mind and what it knows are fundamentally different types of entities, separated by the gulf between the "inner" and the "outer" worlds. The internality of the mind leads naturally to the conclusion that knowing the external world, since this is of a different stuff than the mental, involves representation.⁵⁶ Richard Rorty has suggested that mind is then conceived of as the mirror of nature, which suggests "the notion of knowledge as accurate representation made possible by special mental processes, and intelligible through a general theory of representation".⁵⁷ Current theories of cognition termed "information processing" fall into this paradigm. However other approaches to cognition call this paradigm into question. Some of these have been termed "hermeneutical", "self-organizing" or "auto-poietic"⁵⁸.

One prevalent response to the epistemological problem has been to absolutize the subjective viewpoint, as in the Kantian transcendental subject. From the Buddhist tradition, the notion of an absolute subject (ātman) as a permanent entity was always rejected. The Buddhists would certainly agree with Kant as far as his contention that cognition involves categories of judgement that are "brought to" rather than "abstracted from" the perceptual situation. However Buddhist thinkers asserted that the subject is co-constituted along with other "categories". Here the distinction from the Hindu schools can be drawn.⁵⁹ The rejection of the absolute ego, or self, by Buddhist thinkers was consistent with the observation of the impermanence

of all things as well as from a developing functional model of mind and mental processes.

The problems that arise out of a belief in an objectively-given world have surfaced in other areas of research. The biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela have had to reject the notion of the "objective world" in order to develop their innovative theory of the biological roots of knowledge⁶⁰. Maturana and Varela suggest that an organism must be treated as an auto-poetic (literally "self-producing") unity whose nervous system is characterized by operational closure. Instead of forming "representations" of the "objective world", the organism responds to a triggering from the environment. How the organism, as a unity having operational closure, responds is not determined. It is the nervous system's structural state that determines what perturbations are possible and what can trigger perturbations. In some sense it is the observer who determines its interaction with the environment by specifying to what perturbation it will respond. One could extrapolate from this conclusion and suggest that it is meaning that is of foremost importance even in the simplest acts of knowing.

This view rejects the thesis that there is an "objective world" merely awaiting our discovery. Yet this does not imply solipsism since there is the constant interaction with the environment. The auto-poetic view merely rejects the thesis that the environment is prepackaged into "objective" form and insists that knowledge without the knower is an impossibility. In addition it insists that the intentions of the organism are inextricably linked to the types of relationships that may evolve and that these relationships include the maps that are formed. If cognition is intentional it makes no sense to deal with the objective pole without consideration of the subjective

role. Conversely it is also incomplete to speak of the subjective pole, as idealism has done, without reference to the objective pole. Instead the autopoietic view, like that of the Yogacharas, insists on the intentionality of cognition.

The belief in the objectivity of the external world may arise from a confusion of levels of explanation. One level is that of direct experience. From this viewpoint all knowing is successful action. A second level of explanation arises in conceptualizing the environment in terms of the successful actions of various agents. This level of explanation also recognizes the coordination of action amongst agents through the use of language. Here it is convenient to assume that all knowers, as members of a linguistic community, inhabit the "same world". Instead of merely stating that members of a linguistic community share procedures and rules allowing for successful action, often this is taken as a claim for an objectively given state of affairs. The next step is to assume a common "objective" world that is seen by all others. The defects of this thesis are not readily apparent when business is as usual but appear in times of epistemological crisis. These epistemological crises often occur when encountering diversity amongst individuals, in artistic challenges to the accepted ways or when different linguistic communities are encountered.

According to Heidegger's analysis Western philosophy is faced with such a crisis in the challenge of nihilism. Nihilism casts into doubt all foundations for human knowledge and valuation outside of relations of power. This crisis, thinks Heidegger, can only be met by opening up the question of being. In Heidegger's terms, Dasein is not merely an entity that "is" but an entity that in its very existence is born with an understanding of what it means to exist. It is this embodied understanding that grounds the

act of knowing and understanding. By insisting on the necessity of objective knowledge, without a knower, the objectivist discards the foundation of knowing and valuation.

It is natural to think of the mental events as being somehow different in a fundamental way from events thought to be "in the world". However if we take experience as our basis, this intuition can be elaborated as distinguishing two modalities of experience, the one involving a cognition of an epistemological object, generally believed to refer to an ontological object, while the other focuses on the act of experiencing itself, a focusing on the content of awareness. This insight was suggested by Sautrāntika thinkers, who were moving strongly in the direction of the position ultimately taken by the Yogācāra school. This led to an examination of the place of non-referential awareness (rang-rig) within experience. Non-referential awareness remains intentional but has not yet fallen into the trap of divisive thinking in which objects are taken to be something solid that can then be desired, rejected, or avoided. Intentionality is not rejected but rather is taken as a process having a fluidity of function, not as the static bridge between a pre-given object and an apprehending subject. In phenomenological terms, the positing of an ontological object to correspond to the epistemological object is bracketed. As Merleau-Ponty would say, the death of the consciousness has not yet occurred. In Yogācāra thinking it was argued that nonreferential awareness remains within the domain of originary experience. From this viewpoint the conclusion that only non-referential awareness is ultimately valid was established.

The notion of non-referential awareness can be taken as implying a kind of solipsism. This criticism is certainly valid if one concludes that since all perception involves a mental process everything that is perceived must

be "mental". While it is likely that some of the Yogacara thinkers did subscribe to this view⁶¹, this conclusion does not bear on the main insight of Yogācāra thinkers. Their main insight was to point out that "objects" do not have independent existence and that to believe in their independent existence is to stray from the immediacy of the given experiential field and to become lost in projections that dissolve upon examination. Instead of implying that the subject does not go beyond his own point of view, the Yogācāra school wished to point to the immediacy of experience before the schism of subject and object became firmly instantiated. Their claim was that non-referential awareness, because it is not caught up in what is believed to be objective referents, actually restores freshness and clarity to experience.

D) The Mādhyamika Critique.

The basic insight that phenomena cannot be divorced from our experience of them and that experience as such is therefore of greatest importance in man's meaning seeking activity was often lost sight of in subsequent critiques of the Yogācāra position. The Mādhyamikas argued that each philosophical system offered a model of what reality is like. Even the Yogācāra system presented a model in which reality is seen as the functioning of "mind". This model could not be said to be true because there is no relation between the model and the "reality" outside of it.⁶² It is important to summarize this critique as a means of setting the stage for the rDzogs-chen response and in particular for their new formulation of the important term stong-pa.⁶³

The Mādhyamikas critique may be seen as a relentless questioning of any claim that there are self-existing entities or relations. The Sanskrit term for such a claim is svabhāva, translated into Tibetan as rang-bzhin. Rang-bzhin has been translated into English as "self-existence" or "own-being" and involves the claim that there is some self-sufficient principle that makes something what it is independent of external conditions. The critique of this notion is summed up under the terms śūnyatā in Sanskrit and by stong-pa nyid in Tibetan which has been variously translated as "emptiness", "openness" or "nothingness". From the Mādhyamika position an uncompromising logical analysis reveals the inconsistency of any thesis that claims that "objects", whether these be material or mental, or relationships among "objects", exist. Indeed this criticism extends to include the notion of causality as understood in terms of a "final cause". Instead the Mādhyamikas accounted for phenomenal appearance in terms of the notion

of dependent co- origination (pratītyasamutpāda).⁶⁴ All so-called entities arise in dependent relations and therefore have no self-existence, nothing that could define them as independent. Dependent co- ordination is not a cause and effect relationship for which some assumption of a least causally efficacious entities would seem to be required. Mādhyamika thinkers also denied that there is an principle by which things arise. What appears as "entities" on the phenomenal level has no enduring substance since everything arises in dependent co-origination and this is, from the level of someone who properly apprehends reality, emptiness.

The Mādhyamikas critique of the Yogācāra position reveals that in spite of the claim to stick to the immediacy of experience, a model of "reality" has crept in. This tendency to posit models is perhaps a necessary function of any attempt at an epistemology. In this regard it is notable that remaining within this hard-line critical position, as the Prāsangika branch of the Mādhyamika system did, provides little new in the way of analysis of the human condition. Every model has the limitation of being a particular viewpoint which, in making a claim, excludes other possibilities from being recognized. From a critical point of view, no model can withstand criticism. From an experiential viewpoint, it is difficult to live within models without feeling their constraining hold. It is in this regard that the more ontologically oriented Vajrayana schools of Buddhism kept alive the central concern with meaning, emphasizing the openness of experience and the creative participation of the individual.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RDZOGS-CHEN APPROACH TO MIND

A) How rDzogs-chen Surpasses the Philosophical Approaches

The various approaches to mind of the Buddhist philosophical systems can be characterized as models that suggest appropriate ways to understand or approach what we can only lamely term "reality". The Mādhyamika school saw that each of these "models" were constructions and that the only truth value a construction has is of a relative nature. That is, the truth value of a construction is in its success with regard to fulfilling the intentions of the group formulating the theory. That "reality" or "being" or "universe" eludes capture in any model is certain, and evidenced in every occasion that goes beyond the confines of what we "think" or "describe" reality to be like. Although the Madhyamikas school criticized the "model-building" approach, it failed to show a way to get beyond the problems this approach engenders.

The approach to mind attributed to the philosophical schools falls roughly into what is characterized as the "causality- directed vehicle" (rgyu'i-theg-pa). Causality, as interpreted by later Buddhist thinkers, does not imply "final cause" but instead is described in terms of the momentum of a process which tends towards particular phases or situations that can be singled out for analysis.⁶⁵ In his commentary to the Yon-tan mdzod, Yon-tan rgya-mtsho stated that the causality-directed approach is concerned with goal attainment (pha-rol [tul] phyin[-pa]). The process of attaining the

goal is structured in terms of temporal sequence (snga-phyi) such that a goal is to be achieved in a time to come, usually through the accumulation of knowledge and merits (tshogs-gnyis). The causality-directed vehicle is concerned with determining the appropriate way of understanding reality so that the goal, termed nirvana, can be effectively reached at a future point. In some respects the philosophical questions this approach engenders are similar to those that arise in the focus on "causality" that characterizes the metaphysical approach to philosophy in the West, as we have described in Chapter One.

The causality-directed vehicle is contrasted to the goal-directed vehicle ('bras-bu'i theg-pa), also termed the Vajrayana or Mantrayana approaches. From the viewpoint of the Vajrayana approach, the rejection of the model-building approach is also motivated by the existential realization of the alienation engendered by living within models, no matter how encompassing or enchanting they may be. An exclusive concentration on model-building makes us overlook the fact that we are creative participants helping to actively shape reality. It also overlooks the question of the meaning of being, which cannot be captured in models or encompassed by thinking and is the source of the wonderment that restores the ecstatic intensity of life. This does not entail an outright rejection of the model-building process. Instead Vajrayana thinkers insisted that there are two reality modes, the model-building one (kun-rdzob)⁶⁶ and the ultimately valid one (don-dam), and that they are inseparable (dbyer-med). According to the Vajrayana approach, reality or Being as the whole cannot be encompassed by an model. In focussing on the meaning of being the Vajrayana approach saw that the relationship between the individual, as part of the whole, and the whole itself is of primary existential importance.

The rDzogs-chen approach is considered by the rNying-ma or "old" schools of Tibetan Buddhism to be the highest approach of the Vajrayana teachings. The tenth chapter of the Yon-tan Mdzod presents an introduction to the Vajrayana approach in general. It is beyond the scope of this study to go into this subject in detail or present an account of the specific subdivisions.⁶⁷ We will focus on the teaching of the rDzogs-chen tradition without bringing out points of similarity or contrast with other Vajrayana approaches.

In three verses of the Yon-tan Mdzod, 'jigs-med-gling-pa summed up how the rDzogs-chen approach differs from and surpasses the attempts of the philosophical schools to fathom and embody the Buddhist concern with the full realization of Being.

Reasoning that develops arguments for disputation,
analyzing, tracing steps, and following up,
Diverges from what ultimately matters.
Each experiences this directly, it is not an object that can be
talked about.
The reasoning of the philosophical systems which claim there
are particular existents,
is the reasoning of a limited and inferior level.
The atemporal cognitiveness of the Victorious One goes beyond
what can be cut up and analyzed
The way of utter completeness (rDzogs-chen), from the
beginning, free.⁶⁸

The reality of openness is not constrained by the presencing of
the knowable.
The energy of openness, in itself a lucency,
is present as excitatory intelligence in the domain where
pristine cognition and meaningful gestalt
are inseparable like the sun and its energy.

The term don-dam, which we have translated as "what ultimately matters", is composed of two terms, "don" which among other meanings has the connotation of "meaning or value" and "dam" which connotes "that which holds or supports us" or "that which we hold to". "What ultimately matters" (don-dam) is contrasted with the level of conventional "kun-rdzob" in characterizing the two "realities". In contrast don-dam describes that which is experienced directly or as the quotation states, that which people can only experience for themselves. Yet this viewpoint is not a return to subjectivity but rather an insistence on the immediacy of experience and a refusal to be sidetracked into mere descriptions or models of "reality". This focus is actually an attempt to surpass individual limitations rather than give in to them as can be seen in a passage from the Bodhicaryavatara, quoted by Yontan rgya-mtsho:69

What ultimately matters is not an object for one's subjective activity, this subjective activity is what is called the conventional level.

According to this viewpoint the conventionally accepted level of instrumental concern remains within the grasp of subjective thinking. We are interested in things because of how they concern or affect us. As Yontan rgya-mtsho elaborated, each of the followers of a philosophical system is trapped by his own fetters like a silk worm caught in his own cocoon⁷⁰. Each system tries to treat reality as some analyzable entity, whether this be a material thing or a mental substance.

According to rDzogs-chen, the naive attitude with its belief in the existence of "things" occurs as a drop in the high level of cognitive excitation (rig-pa) in which the fluidity of intentionality hardens into the static

subject/object dichotomy. Instead of the free play of the noematic perspective in relationship with the noetic functioning, the noematic pole is taken to be a fixed and final "thing". The concern with "things" is what is implied by stating that mentation is thoroughly bound up with the objective domain. rDzogs-chen thinkers did not deny the "reality" of the world of the naive attitude, a charge that has been laid against Eastern thinking as a whole on the basis of statements by later followers of post Shankara Vedanta. Instead they carefully distinguished between conventional truth (kun rdzob) and that which ultimately matters (don dam). For practical purposes there is no denying that language serves to identify and coordinate a multitude of human projects. But this instrumental usefulness may obscure the openness of cognition if "objects" are assumed to have independent existence. It is this assumption that rDzogs-chen thinkers strongly attacked. They saw it as a deviation from the primacy of experience in which a person engages in mistaken identification ('khrul-pa). The "object" then elicits emotional responses that lead into further and further blundering as one is faced with the problems arising out of taking something for what it is not. This involvement diverts attention and energy away from the problems that address an individual most directly, namely, finding meaning in life. It is the focus on the meaning of being, rather than a particular model of "Being" or "universe", that characterizes the Vajrayana approach.

How does the central question of the meaning of beings get asked. rDzogs-chen thinkers saw clearly that Being (in the ontological sense) can be nowhere else than with beings. That is, human existence as unification of embodiment, speech, and sociality, is always suffused by Being. As Paul Häberlin has seen, Being is always the being of that which is.⁷¹ Therefore

there is not Being apart from or behind beings, nor is there Being as a whole, since being is not something. An ontological concern is concerned with the being of beings, and, in particular, what it means to be.

Heidegger has dealt with the difference between a concern with Being and with the things we encounter in terms of "ontological difference".⁷² In general we can say that ontological difference points out the inherent difference between the things that are (beings) and Being as the lighting up process by which beings are illuminated as beings. Being (capitalized to indicate that we are speaking of being in the ontological versus the ontic sense) is necessarily a vague and general concept since it cannot be pointed out as something-that-is. It makes no sense to say: here is Being, or there it is not. Yet the vagueness of this formulation is not an expression of fuzzy or vague thinking but rather of the fact that the most general of concepts is necessarily the most broad and indeterminate. To even speak of "Being" is problematic, since it is to put "Being" into the same linguistic framework as other "things" that we may delineate and point out. The grammatical structure of our language leads us into the mistaken assumption that if Being is a noun, it must stand for a thing that can have certain properties and engage in or be the object of actions. To treat "Being" within this framework as a "thing", only perhaps more grand in scope, overlooks the ontological difference. In relation to rDzogs-chen thinking we might provisionally say that the difference between mentation and excitatory intelligence is similar to the ontological difference in that mentation operates on the level of the ontic, that is, it deals with the things-that-are, while excitatory intelligence is commensurate with Being.

In the ontological approach the climax or goal (bras-bu) is said to be immediately present in the same sense that we have indicated that Being is

nowhere else than in being. To bring this out, Guenther used the term "Being-qua-Existenz".⁷³ He elaborated this situation by saying:

Although, in fact, retaining an indivisible unitary character, Being-qua-Existenz, in its unfoldment can be discussed in terms of a basic level or ground (gzhi), the progressive unfoldment of the process (lam), and the climaxing or optimization of the process ('bras-bu). It must be remembered, however, that what may constitute an optimization from one perspective, may also, from another perspective, serve as the ground for further unfoldment.⁷⁴

This triad of ground, path, and goal show up in the structuring of the last three chapters of the Yon-tan mdzod, which present the rDzogs-chen approach. Each of the three chapters presents one aspect of this triad. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to indicate the complicated interconnectedness and hierarchical dynamic of this presentation. However it is important to indicate the overall thrust of the rDzogs-chen interpretation. Although it is impossible to reduce intelligence to a theory, no matter how compelling, it is still possible to describe the operations. As we shall see, intelligence was described by rDzogs-chen thinkers as an integral aspect of Being. To delimit and circumscribe something termed "intelligence" or mind would be to remain in an ontic level of analysis and miss the unique contribution of rDzogs-chen thinking. Indeed, it is remaining within the ontic level that characterizes the low level operations of mentation (sems) and distinguishes this level from that of

excitatory intelligence (rig-pa) in which the dynamics of Being recover their free reach and range.

In bringing out the distinction between mentation and excitatory intelligence we are forced, because of the holistic approach involved, to touch upon some of the main themes present in rDzogs-chen thinking. We shall anchor our discussion of this distinction in terms of the discussion undertaken in the Yon-tan mdzod and in particular, its elaboration in the commentaries by 'Jigs-med gling-pa, Yon-tan rgya-mtsho, and dPal-sprul. As noted, these works were written at a late date in the development of rDzogs-chen thinking and largely summarize or preserve key insights of earlier thinkers.

B) The rDzogs-chen Account of Being

Integral to the rDzogs-chen approach is a concern for the totality of all that is, with nothing left out. This includes not just what can be pointed to and conceptualized, but also the "background" against which this singling out of things and meanings takes place. The totality may be referred to as the Universe proper, which is distinguished from any of the various "universes" or maps that we might make.⁷⁵ Or we might speak of this as a concern for Being that is nowhere else than in "beings". The use of capital letters should not be taken as indicating that these are "absolutes", implying some ultimate or transcendent reality apart from or independent of experience, but rather to indicate that no matter how we talk of or model this totality, we never encompass that of which we speak. Yet it is clear that if we are to go beyond our limited models and habituated tendencies "Being" or "Universe" must be available in some way or other.

rDzogs-chen thinkers refer to Being or Universe as the "totality ground" (kun-gyi gzhi, not the same as kun-gzhi which has been discussed in Chapter Two)⁷⁶ or simply "ground" (gzhi). The totality ground or ground is described as lucent openness or open lucency (stong-gsal), the paradox of there being nothing and yet a lucency⁷⁷. The eleventh chapter of the Yon-tan mdzod discusses the ground as described by rDzogs-chen thinkers. In attempting to characterize the rDzogs-chen understanding of Being, in which Being as the whole defies categorization yet presents simultaneous facets of its underlying dynamics, Guenther has referred to "atemporally abiding aspects".⁷⁸ Unlike the entities that we assume to have a beginning point and an end, Being does not take place "in" time and cannot be said to have a temporal beginning or end. Instead Being presents the possibility for events

to occur in time and space. The aspects we single out from the dynamic wholeness are thus said to be "atemporal". The dynamic character of Being is described in rDzogs-chen thinking as simultaneously displaying three atemporally abiding aspects:⁷⁹

1. dynamic openness (stong-pa), Being cannot be reduced to some-"thing".
2. sheer lucency (gsal-ba), Being's pure energy.
3. excitatory intelligence (rig-pa), the intrinsic intelligence of Being.

In rDzogs-chen thinking stong-pa nyid certainly connotes the absence of any ontological principle (bdag-med). Stong-pa nyid for rDzogs-chen thinkers is not just a noun, implying a state of affairs that is a denial of the existence of "something", but taken in its verbal form emphasizes the dynamic aspect of "emptiness". Stong-pa which Tibetans understood as a verb as well as a noun, can also be used as an adverb in the form stongs, as in, for example, "becoming dissolved (stongs) of karma and emotional obscurations."⁸⁰ Stong-pa, usually translated as empty, or nothing, in the rDzogs-chen sense would refer to a much more active operation than is usually assumed from the Mādhyamika interpretation. Therefore we could translate this term in the appropriate location as "opening up", as an active rather than a static notion implying merely the absence of something. rDzogs-chen texts often combine stong-pa with snang-ba as in the compound snang-stong. Snang, which is certainly a verbal form, means "a lighting up" or presencing but not a presencing of some-"thing", perhaps

similar to the Greek verbal form phainetei, with its connotations of "lighting up, self-showing, coming out, appearing forth".⁸¹ In short this compound presents the combination of two seemingly contradictory ideas into a dynamic unity: of there being openness, not limited by "thingness" and yet a lighting up, a presence that is not a presence of some- thing. Heidegger in his latter thinking dropped the term "phenomenon" in favour of the verbal form "phainetei" to stress the self-showing nature. Vail hyphenates the term "letting-be- seen-that-which-shows-itself" to suggest the unity of this process.⁸²

The combination of two ideas that would at first seem to be mutually inconsistent, presencing and openness, into dynamic concept is characteristic of rDzogs-chen thinking, which attempts to describe Being in its wholeness rather than to dissect and build models of assumed regularities. The rDzogs-chen interpretation of stong-pa as "openness" thus includes and surpasses the general Mādhyamika formulation of this principle as "emptiness". Instead of a presentation of nothingness with its associations of a void or the blackness of empty space, the actuality of openness is a radiant intensity. Guenther's investigations of the use of the term stong-pa in the Tibetan context have suggested that this idea might be comparable with recent results in Quantum theory in which, as P.C.W. Davies suggests: "we can no longer think of a vacuum as 'empty'. Instead it is filled to capacity with thousands of different types of particles, forming, interacting and disappearing, in an incessant sea of activity."⁸³

While we have already described how rDzogs-chen thinking goes beyond the Yogācāra system, here we can suggest how it transcends the Mādhyamika formulations which have certainly had greater exposure in the West. Nagarjuna's Mādhyamika system furnishes a critical method to

destroy any claim that entities may be "self-existent". Entities only arise and cease in a web of functional connections. If there are no entities, then words have no reference point and lose their meaning. Frederick J. Streng concluded that Nagarjuna's dialectics:

denies the context in which the question of truth can be meaningfully answered through a particular expression or a universal intuition. The most forceful expression of such an empty relationship is silence ... which is indifferent to formulation or rejection of formulation. Where such silence is not understood, there a negative dialectic (which calls into question even its own dialectical process) may be effective.⁸⁴

The Mādhyamika position operates against a general view of language in which words stand for "things", be these objects, relations, or meanings. Showing that these "things" cannot be said to have self-existence entails that speaking of "things" is no different from talking about phantoms or dreams. However this conclusion only follows from an "objectivist" theory of language that rDzogs-chen thinking would challenge. In rDzogs-chen thinking the discovery that "things" have no own-being occasions a return to the experiential matrix from which limited, purely relational concepts arise, and rediscovery of the creative potential of metaphor to bring an opening of perspective without taking any one "metaphor" as being an endpoint.⁸⁵ In the Western context this is what Nietzsche intimated by pointing out the metaphorical nature of language and the poetic nature of true philosophy.⁸⁶

The "objectivist" model of meaning, which is coming under renewed scrutiny by modern thinkers, fails to do justice to the what Mark Johnson

delineated as "embodied understanding".⁸⁷ Johnson argued that traditional accounts of meaning, which he characterized as "objectivist", fail to grant "a central place to embodied and imaginative structures of understanding by which we grasp our world"⁸⁸. This criticism of the objectivist model of language and the recovery of the body of lived understanding also has been argued by David Levin, who entitled his book The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism⁸⁹.

An objectivist account of meaning must look outside the so-called "subjective" experience of the embodied individual for a guarantee of meaningfulness and communicability. Such a standpoint ignores the richness of associative meaning and the creativity of suggestive metaphor⁹⁰. An "objectivist" standpoint takes these facets out of the realm of serious discourse. Language is dis-connected and left without its connection to the expression and embodiment of lived experience. Neither is a subjectivist account of meaning an adequate alternative. It takes the other side of the subjective/objective dichotomy instead of developing a position in which the complementarity of the noematic and noetic poles of experience is recognized. In rDzogs-chen perspective, the complementarity of openness/radiance (stong-gsal) as a presencing but not the presencing of some-thing indicates that language can have no reference in the sense of an objective terminus. Instead language is a way of bringing a world into existence or is a way of pointing to the dynamics of experience, and yet has a transparency that does not allow it to be held onto as something that may be determined as final.

In discussing the rDzogs-chen approach to Being, it is important to draw attention to a triad of terms used in rDzogs-chen ontological process thinking: ngo-bo 'facticity', rang-bzhin 'actuality' and thugs-rje 'resonating

concern'.⁹¹ Translating ngo-bo as 'facticity', a term that is important in Heidegger's thinking, points towards what we have termed the ontological sense. Heidegger explicated this term in Being and Time:

Facticity is not the factuality of the factum brutum of something present-at-hand, but a characteristic of Dasein's Being - one which has been taken up into existence, even if proximally it has been thrust aside. The "that-it-is" of facticity never becomes something that we can come across by beholding it.⁹²

That facticity has nothing to do with "some-thing", be this a substance or quality that we come across, is expressed in rDzogs-chen terminology as stong-pa, which we have described as a dynamic openness indicating the non-reducibility of Being.

It is important to note that this account is not an attempt to explain but rather to describe the dynamics of the "ground". Instead of modelling "Being", rDzogs-chen thinking moves in the direction of what might be called "inner-standing", which is not a conceptual grasp of something one is able to view from without, but which is rather an inner understanding. "Inner" is used to stress the fact that Being is nowhere else than in beings, as previously noted. By attempting to understand the universe we also come to an understanding of ourselves as part of the universe. Self-understanding and the understanding of the broader universe may not be as diametrically opposed as is often supposed.

Talking of "self-understanding" raises an immediate problem. How is it possible to indicate that understanding is reflexive without relying on the

existence of a "self" and restating the dissociation of the subject from the object. One way of resolving this problem is to draw upon the concept of "system". Anything can be conceptualized as a system. Self-reference can then be delineated as the reference of a system with regards to its own operation at particular times.

Erich Jantsch addressed this problem of self-reference with regard to self-organizing systems. Jantsch's work supplements the insights of Maturana and Varela in developing a theory in which living, evolutionary systems are seen as autopoietic (literally self-producing) unities. As Jantsch stated:

In a specific autopoietic regime, the system is self-referential with respect to a specific space-time structure. In a broader perspective, we may now characterize an evolving system as being self-referential with respect to its own evolution - that is to say, with respect to itself as a dynamic system with the potential of manifesting itself in a variety of structures, not in random order, but in coherent, evolutionary sequences. The levels of global stability an autopoietic existence revealed along such an evolutionary path are not predetermined, but result partly from the interaction between system and environment. In this respect, they represent true experience. We may also say that knowledge is expressed by the system's finding of its own stability with respect to fluctuations and, further, that this knowledge is nothing else but the experience of the interaction between system and environment, cast into a specific reference frame. In this sense, all knowledge is experience; objective and

In this light the second abiding feature of the rDzogs-chen account of Being can be introduced. Rang-bzhin in the rDzogs-chen sense must also be distinguished from the usage of this term that has been criticized by Mādhyamika thinkers. The usage of the term they criticized was the concept of self-nature, that is, the assertion that there is some principle of identity by which entities can be established to have independent existence. rDzogs-chen thinkers concurred with the criticism of this usage of the term. Rang-bzhin, in rDzogs-chen usage, is an ontological term. The term is composed of two units. The first, rang, indicates "self" or "subject", but not in the sense of an ego or any other ontic "entity" that has been shown to have no independent existence. Rang here points to Being since it is only Being that does not depend on something else. Thus rang does not indicate a "self" as much as point to the holistic sense of Being. In this interpretation, "bzhin" is a continuative particle, which means that this subject as subject remains what it is. Thus rang-bzhin has been translated as "actuality"⁹⁴. Every individual thing, event or meaning is without actuality and is only a construct. Only Being has actuality.

Existence can be viewed from two perspectives. First existence has a particular pattern, a history and a particular setting. In a second sense Being, which allows the opening for this particular form of existence, is nowhere else than in existence. Existence presents the possibility of self-understanding which includes not only the possibility of mirroring itself in its particularity but also the expression of Being itself.

Excitatory intelligence as an atemporally abiding aspect of Being is described as the intrinsic intelligence of Being. According to the Buddhist conception, intelligence is not an afterthought, or a type of design necessitating a creator, but rather an inherent feature of Being or Universe. According to the rDzogs-chen understanding of the dynamics of Being, sheer presence, which is not qualified as a presence of something but rather described as complementarity of openness and radiance, elicits a response simply by this presence. As noted, Existence is suffused by Being as indicated by the term Being-qua-Existenz. Existence thus presents the possibility for the disclosure of Being. In the resonating concern (thugs-rje) is present the possibility of discovering the fullest reach and range of being or the possibility of becoming estranged from Being and losing freedom in the maze of fictions this estrangement engenders.

The ground (gzhi) provides the possibility for going astray into the subjectivity of vested projects and affect-arousing fictions or, on the other hand, for going free. We have already indicated that according to Yogācāra thinkers there are two structural deployments that experience may take: either into the increasing divisiveness and fixation of habitual blundering or into the free reach and range of pristine cognition. Throughout Yogācāra thinking the strongest emphasis was on the questions of knowledge and perception. Even the term Cittamatra or Sems-tsam indicates the cognitive dimension of experience. In rDzogs-chen thinking this narrower emphasis was broadened into a concern for the widest and most inclusive sense of Being. In some ways this is also the emptiest sense, since it includes all aspects, as well as the background out of which they have arisen.

In rDzogs-chen thinking, Being provides the possibility for both going astray or remaining in (or recovering) the free range of Being's meaning rich

gestalt (chos-sku). This latter sense is described as the ka-dag, the diaphanously pure. This purity is not a purity from sin, but rather is contrasted with the grime associated with the kun-gzhi, the all-ground, which is associated with a drop in the excitation of excitatory intelligence. Thus the branching point is related to whether excitatory intelligence operates at its fullest potential or else drops in excitation thereby introducing the lower levels of operation. Yet this branching is not a disjunction because even the ma-rig-pa associated with the falling off still is connected with the dynamics of Being. There is no fall from grace or ultimate estrangement. The possibility of accessing the fullest potential of Being is always present, if only in a dim or obscured manner.

While the Yogācāra formulation, with its emphasis on cognitive operations, illustrates how this going astray deployment of experience actualizes itself, there remains the problem of how freedom in operation is possible. In rDzogs-chen thinking originary awareness, as a function of cognitive excitation, was understood as Being's abidingness in its primordially. It is the actual energy of the thrust towards Being-in-its-beingness.

C) Mentation as Stepped Down Functioning

The development of the understanding of sems has illustrated the movement from the relatively primitive notion of mind as an entity amongst others, to a view of mental processing as a dynamic feedback/feedforward operation, to finally a recovery/discovery of the open dynamics of experience. As noted by Yogācāra thinkers, experience may take two directions. On one hand "experience" (sems) may enter into increasingly hardened form of the subject/object duality accompanied by the tendency to posit objects and the attendant emotional attachments resulting from desiring or avoiding these "objects". On the other hand, experience can "travel" in a "direction" in which the openness of experience is directly encountered and freedom from the constraints of the actional domain of samsaric involvement is spontaneously present.

The Sanskrit texts used the same term "citta" for both directional deployments of experience. Here the Tibetan Buddhist thinkers advanced beyond the Indian traditions by clearly distinguishing these aspects and fully exploring the implications this distinction raises. To anticipate the discussion that will follow we can note that early Tibetan thinkers translated citta according to its context as sems or sems-nyid, the nyid particle emphasizing the processing of sems, almost as a "experience- itself" before the openness has congealed into the naturalistic attitude. Sems-nyid can be used interchangeably with rig-pa, which we have provisionally translated as excitatory intelligence. Thus the Sems-nyid ngal-gso of Klong-chen rab-byams-pa uses the term sems-nyid to contrast with sems (ordinary mentation) while the Yon-tan mdzod of 'jigs-med gling-pa, which is modelled largely after the Sems-nyid ngal-gso, uses the term rig-pa instead.

Three verses of the Yon-tan mdzod distinguish mentation (sems) from excitatory intelligence (rig-pa). First we shall discuss these terms individually and then show in the next chapter how they form a complementary pair, pointing to a fundamental instability phase indicating the dynamics of being. The primary verses of the Yon-tan mdzod distinguishing sems and rig-pa are:95

What is the essence of the rDzogs-chen distinction
That excitatory intelligence surpasses ordinary mentation.
For those who understand, excitatory intelligence is free in its
operation
Those who do not, remain mentation governed in the cycles of
samsara.

Separating these aspects is like water and its bubbles,
In as much as these cannot be divided in the least, ordinary
mentation and excitatory intelligence are similar.
Excitatory intelligence is not anything you can point to, all
boundaries are gone,
Ordinary mentation is murky like water swirling in a ravine.

Excitatory intelligence radiates from the depths like the full
moon.

Ordinary mentation is like the crescent moon covered in
shadows.

The creative potential of excitatory intelligence, clear of
objective referents,

Is distinct from ordinary mentation which is thoroughly bound
up with the objective domain.

Having given a general account of how rDzogs-chen thinking encompassed and yet went beyond the more well-known Buddhist philosophical systems, we can proceed to giving a fuller account of what is meant by mentation. The root of mentation is referred to as ma-rig-pa, a

term that is not a negation of excitatory intelligence (rig-pa), but rather a qualification of this intelligence such that we might say that excitatory intelligence is not at its fullest potential. Alternatively we might say that ma-rig-pa refers to a drop in the excitation of cognition. Already it is obvious that mentation and excitatory intelligence are not separate processes but rather that they are connected in such a way that we might speak of the pervasiveness of intelligence throughout the universe of experience. However the full potential of excitatory intelligence becomes obscured such that a collapse occurs into the habituated noetic\noematic complex, and a further reduction of the openness of experience into the solidification of the ego-centric demanding of subjectivity and into what are taken as the "objects" that are assumed to have independent existence. As Yon-tan rgya-mtsho stated:

As to that which is called "mentation", it is an appropriating activity due to various habitual tendencies, which from out of the radiant cognitivity of excitatory intelligence constructs models. From this arises the grasping and soliciting poles of experience and the elicited project. From this elicitation, although it is nothing objective in itself, comes the radiant presencing of form, sound, smell, odour, and touch.

From the apprehending aspect of mentation, stated Yon-tan rgya mtsho, "comes the presencing of karma and the maturation of emotion obscurations beyond measure".⁹⁶

Mentation as a process is summed up as the eightfold (cognitive) ensemble (shogs-brgyad). The first member is termed "the all-ground

tending toward cognitive operations" (kun-gzhi'i rnam-par shes-pa) and indicates a directionality towards particular cognitive operations or judgments that arise out of the indeterminate substratum or all-ground (kun-gzhi). The indeterminate substratum constitutes the totality of inherited programs, or sedimented tendencies (bag-chags) which, when suitably stimulated produce distinct cognitive/emotional situations.⁹⁷

According to the rDzogs-chen conception there is a distinction between the kun-gzhi "the all-ground" and the kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa) as the "all-ground tending towards cognitive operations". This is an important distinction that further illustrates advances of rDzogs-chen thinking over the Yogācāra system. While the all-ground tending towards cognitive operations describes how the cognitive operations of mentation are set up and maintained, it fails to account for the Buddhist contention that a fuller sense of being, unlimited by the boundaries of discursive thinking, is also available. For rDzogs-chen thinkers the all-ground is always available and even underlies or provides the ground for both going astray into the dullness of everyday concern as well as providing the opportunity to recover the openness and freshness of experiencing.

The second member of the eightfold cognitive ensemble can be termed the "ego-logical consciousness" (yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa) and is involved with making particular cognitive judgments. The cognitive ensemble accounts for a movement from the general stirring of the cognitive potential towards more specific cognitive judgments and situations. The third operation is the "emotionally tainted ego-centric consciousness" (nyon-yid or the nyon-mongs-pa'i yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa), which refers to fact that operations, as intentional, refer back to a subjective pole that takes a particular interest in what is taking place. This subjective pole is, for the

Buddhist, an event rather than a persisting entity or central organization. This interest is emotionally tainted because it refers back to an "ego" that takes up a particular interest in projects in terms of whether they arouse aversion, desire or even indifference. The remaining five of the eight members of this ensemble are related to the sensory capacities (smell, touch, hearing, sight and taste), which are co-ordinated with their functions and their sensory domains. Out of this, perceptual datum (rnam-pa), literally that which has determinate aspects or "looks", are singled out. Sems is basically a process/product term for a self-organizing cognitive system that may be looked at as either a process in operation or summed up as a product of its own evolution.⁹⁸ While these processes have been termed cognitive, experience in the Buddhist context is always "embodied" experience. This is readily apparent in the earlier chapters of the Yon-tan mdzod where it is shown how the obscuration of cognitive excitation leads not just into faulty judgments but into a whole life-style.⁹⁹ These various "life-styles" are fully described under the tag of the six kinds of living beings and are important in terms of the psychological insight they provide. The emphasis on embodied experience can also be seen in the often fantastical accounts of the various "hells". These "hells" are not so much concrete experiences as metaphorical presentations of various embodied life-worlds.

This description of the eightfold cognitive ensemble should not be seen as a structural account of the lived content of phenomenological consciousness. rDzogs-chen texts emphasized that there is no final product or structure, instead only the ongoing process of straying into fictions and moving away from the dynamic source and centre. This dynamic source is described as a radiant openness or open radiance (snang-stong), which present the paradox of there being nothing as such and yet a presence or

lighting up (snang). In existential terms we might say that samsara is a kind of alienation in which a person is trapped in fictions of his own making and has lost the source of his freedom. Samsara is not a miserable end-product or even a state of unhappiness but rather an on-going deployment of experience in which a person is figuratively said to be carried away. The Sanskrit term samsara, which has become a part of our language, literally means "to go round and round". The image of a constantly spinning wheel is frequently used when referring to this frustrating and ultimately unhappy condition. However unlike the resigned pessimism in the "existential mood", Buddhist thinkers realized life is not a finished product nor a completed act, but rather, life presents a constantly changing set of problems. Individuals can either react instinctually and mechanically or mobilize critical, appreciative acumen (shes rab:prajñā in Sanskrit) and through appropriate activity (thabs:upāya in Sanskrit) transcend their limit-cycles and emerge into new dimensions of openness and freedom.

While the experientially initiated traces of the natural attitude result in the opaque "structure" and habitual ways of relating to this intended world, there is also a possibility to recover the freshness of presencing before this patterning takes place. Thus emphasis is put on the possibility of attaining new and open noetic contexts and on the positive destruction of habituated tendencies. In this regard aesthetic experience is highly valued because of its possibility for revealing new and rich appreciative contexts. By implication, the rDzogs-chen concern with opening up the experiential field does not preclude constructive or model-building activities, instead it criticizes attempts to remain within these models, whatever they might be. David Bohm and F. David Peat have captured this idea in a modern context by suggesting that creative thinking involves a playfulness that dissolves the

habituated and rigidly held ideas of the tacit infrastructure of accepted knowledge and shows that rigidity is itself a false kind of play.¹⁰⁰

Some investigators have noted parallels between the crisis in the modern sciences in which the classical deterministic model of the world has been overthrown and the critical overthrow of the solid world of everyday concern by Buddhist thinkers¹⁰¹. The ordinary world commonly believed to be absolutely given is strikingly similar to the world of classical physics. We interact with "things" we are certain are "really there", we look for simple and linear causal explanations, and fit every-"thing" into the logic of either/or, true or false. It has been suggested that Buddhism or other Eastern ways of thinking show parallels to Quantum physics¹⁰². Caution is in order here for as Nick Herbert emphasized, there are at this time at least eight viable models of "Quantum Realities", all predicting the same results and compatible with the mathematical formulations.¹⁰³ Herbert suggests that the greatest unknown is the nature of consciousness. In a Quantum universe, consciousness itself is a quantum effect. If this is the case perhaps part of the problem of integrating the results of Quantum theory with our understanding of the world is that experience has consistently been treated as if it were determined within a classical physics universe, and anything that was outside these boundaries was treated as suspect or at best as "merely" subjective. If we take what the Buddhists have to contribute seriously, opening up the field of experience that is free from the boundaries of the mechanistic world view may show that there is indeed an access to what Herbert called "quantum knowledge".¹⁰⁴

D) Excitatory Intelligence as Instability Point

It is by coming face to face with excitatory intelligence (rig-pa) that the opportunity, path, and goal of realizing the full potential of being is present. As the Mu-tig phreng-ba, an important tantra for the rDzogs-chen tradition, states:

The difference between ordinary mentation and excitatory intelligence is to be known by the wise.105

Jigs-med gling-pa stated that a distinguishing feature of rDzogs-chen is that it shows how to directly encounter excitatory intelligence (rig-pa).106 Conversely, rDzogs-chen also shows how not to get into the power of mentation. His commentary states:

From the creative surging of Being's excitatory intelligence is the frolicking in which arises the external domain although there is nothing there to examine. This (arising) is also free from the grasping of the presencing as cognition and is not found as the internal domain of mind. This is the dissolution of the subject/object dichotomy. Excitatory intelligence, which is nothing as such, is free in its reach and range from samsara after dissolving the emotional entanglements and karmic involvement.107

Yon-tan rgya-mtsho spoke of this experience as having reached a level where everything is completely gone. On this level the sedimented habits

that take experience to be something, whether this be an object, subject, entity or a mental process, dissolve. As noted previously, excitatory intelligence is described as being open, radiant and non-fabricated. To distinguish this level from the ordinary enframement of mentation, it is spoken of as the Kun-tu bzang-po realm, or as the gestalt of meaningfulness (chos-sku). We might then contrast embodied mentation (sems-can) with (sangs-rgyas). As Klong-chen-pa said:

When everything, all the mistaken notions of the inner and
outer domains,
cannot be objectified, like the sky, one reaches the
intentionality of the meaning-rich gestalt.
to arrive where everything has gone, with nothing to come or
go,
One has reached the supreme home of the continuum of
meaningfulness.
a vortex of loving kindness, the Kun-tu bzang-po realm.108

Those who do not understand the operations of excitatory intelligence, which is meaning itself not just something that "has" meaning, remain as sentient beings (literally those endowed with mentation [sems-can]). As Yon-tan rgya-mtsho stated: "from the all-ground arises the presencing in mind of the existents of the internal and external worlds. The grasping of the ego that is opposed to others, this is what is called a sentient being (sems-can)".109

While the mentation governed level is characterized as being held fast by the peg of mentation, with excitatory intelligence freedom is reached. This is not so much a freedom to or a freedom from but rather a freedom in operation. The dynamics of Being are described as free. Therefore freedom

is inherent in the recovery of the full dynamics of Being. Indeed in a paradoxical sense it is the freedom of Being that allows for the loss of freedom described as an alienation from freedom in operation.

The reality of openness is not constrained by the cognitive domain.

This is the very energy of the radiance of actuality of openness. Where excitatory intelligence resides, the domain of gestalt and ordinary cognition.

Which are inseparable like the sun's energy and the sun.110

Excitatory intelligence for rDzogs-chen thinkers thus involves the possibility of optimization and freedom. How is this possibility present? One way of looking at this possibility might be to suggest that excitatory intelligence can be seen as an instability point allowing the possibility of evolution into new domains of operation. As the Mu-tig phreng-ba states:

If one is separate from mentation,
(obscurations) dissipate and (positive
qualities) expand.

All the dross of embodiment is gone.111

As is further described in the Bla-ma yan-tig of Klong-chen-pa:

(with mentation) excitatory intelligence is not clearly evident.
At the time when excitatory intelligence is there, mentation is
not visible.

At one moment this arises, at one movement it ceases.112

These are not two separate types of operation. Instead excitatory intelligence names the movement to a new level of operation in which the

dynamics of creative evolution are accessed and lived. On the level of mentation intelligence is reduced to the habitual operations that remain within particular parameters, while on the "higher" level of excitatory intelligence the dynamics are allowed full range and creative change is made possible. Excitatory intelligence is free in the sense that it allows this creative dynamic to express itself.

Excitatory intelligence has also been characterized as the energy thrust toward optimization (bde-gshegs snying-po). As Klong-chen-pa stated:

It is from the primordial radiance of the thrust towards optimization,
Which is not fabricated; the ongoing actuality of what we really are,
which is from the beginning thoroughly pure, like the sun in the sky.113

Excitatory intelligence is not something added to the system nor is it merely a way of surveying what is already there, but rather it is part of the dynamic of what for want of better term we call "Being" or "Universe". In this regard, Guenther has referred to rig-pa as the total system's (Being's) excitation.114

The conclusion that these are not two processes, but rather that the distinction between mentation and excitatory intelligence indicates recovery of the dynamics of being can also be shown in the examination of the various analogies and metaphors used to characterize this distinction. Both Yon-tan rgya-mtsho and 'jigs-med gling-pa compared excitatory intelligence to a state of affairs such that the great ocean of meaningfulness is not stirred up by the waves of diminished intelligence and the eightfold (cognitive)

ensemble. Perhaps excitatory intelligence is being compared to the reflective, shining quality that water can have, much like a mirror, when not disturbed by the turbulence of waves. As Yon-tan rgya-mtsho emphasized, this is the way of the rDzogs-chen approach, which, by not interfering with what is naturally left to itself a free and ecstatic process, regains the wholeness of Being. Indeed this distinction between experience, as a shorthand term for mind or mentation, and experience itself before being filtered by the stirring of ingrained tendencies and the processing of the eightfold cognitive ensemble, is virtually identical to that of excitatory intelligence and mentation. For those who understand directly, the discursive conceptualization of mentation is described by way of analogy as being similar to drawing pictures on the water. Of course the water is unchanged by this.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sources of the Distinction between Mentation and Excitatory Intelligence

A) Earlier Formulations

The importance of distinguishing mentation (sems) from excitatory intelligence (rig-pa) can be traced back to the earliest periods of rDzogs-chen thinking. The history of the rDzogs-chen teaching is at best sketchy and affixing dates and authorship to many of the key texts, especially the early tantras of the rDzogs-chen tradition, is impossible. Nevertheless we can point to references from what are regarded as the earliest and most central of the rDzogs-chen tantras showing the distinction between mentation and excitatory intelligence. One of the most authoritative accounts of this distinction is given by the fourteenth century author, Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa who, because of his insight and originality, is considered the foremost thinker of the tradition. In his Bla-ma yang-tig, Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa presented a summary of the key ideas used to distinguish mentation from excitatory intelligence. The use of these terms by 'jigs-med gling-pa and Yon-tan rgya-mtsho is thus seen as maintaining a long-established tradition. The twelve contrasts summarized by Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa are listed below and are followed by a brief explanatory comment.115

1. The facticity of mentation is dimming of cognitive excitation (ma-rig-pa). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is pristine cognitiveness (ye-shes).

As previously stated, the facticity of mentation is ma-rig-pa, which is not the negation or absence of cognitive excitation but only its dimming or collapsed state. Contrasted with this diminished cognitive energy is what is termed "pristine cognitiveness". This term can also be used in the plural as "pristine cognitions" and is composed of two roots; "shes-pa", which denotes cognition or the activity of knowing, and "ye", which means beginning, however, in this context it refers to a beginning which is not "within" some temporal sequence, but outside temporality. Since Being, as conceived of in rDzogs-chen thinking, is not something that can occur "in" time - rather Being encompasses temporality, and only individual, ontic "entities" can be said to have beginning or end - the underlying dynamics of Being are described as "atemporal". In more concrete terms we might say that atemporal cognitiveness indicates a cognitive process in which instead of merely repeating habituated tendencies of experiencing, every "cognition" is fresh and new.¹¹⁶ This term indicates a return or recovery of experience in its original purity before it is overlaid with incidental grime or split up into the subjective apprehending of an apprehendable object.

2. The facticity of mentation is connection with karma and habituated tendencies (bag-chags). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is non-connection with karma and habituated tendencies.

3. The facticity of mentation is the essence of mistaken identification ('khrul-pa) and the subject/object duality (gzung-'dzin). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is the actuality of not going in for mistaken identification and having nothing to do with the duality of subject and object.

Both pairs of contrasts have already been discussed in earlier sections dealing with mentation. By way of clarification it should be added that the term "karma", although it has become an accepted part of our vocabulary, actually has nothing to do with "destiny". Karma refers to what might be called the "actional domain" in which actions are both the momentum and modifiers, and in this regard, both the "cause" and "result" of the predicaments we find ourselves in. This has been brought out in the fourth chapter of the Yon-tan mdzod.

4. The facticity of mentation is the limits of the thematic horizon (spros). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is separate from the whole thematic horizon.

In the fourth contrast, excitatory intelligence is said to be disconnected from the intellectual or thematic horizon (spros). Mentation, on the other hand, might be said to comprise this horizon with its in-built limitations. Mentation operates with what can be thematized, talked about, and structured into the familiar pattern of the apprehended world. 'jigs-med gling- pa pointed to four limits (mu-bzhi) that are characteristic of intellectual judgments.¹¹⁷ These consist of four pairs of alternatives including: coming into existence/ceasing (skye- 'gag); eternalism/nihilism (rtag-chad); existence/non-existence (yod-med) and presencing/emptiness (snang-stong). The alternatives presented in these four pairs are all

intellectual judgments that are rejected as being categories of operation performed by mentation, which force an even more solid rigidification of what mind takes to be the real world. It is no trite comment to insist that what we point to as "reality" or refer to in philosophical terms as "Being" cannot be reduced to the models we make. This is not to suggest that rDzogs-chen thinkers rejected the thematic aspect of experience, instead they saw conventional, thematic thinking (kun-rdzob) and the ultimately valid (don-dam) as inseparable. According to Guenther, the inseparability of these "two modes of accessing" is due:

to the self-structuring process of Reality-as-such, whose expressive immediacy is that fundamental concern that comes to the fore as encounters with the inexhaustible source of possibilities of meaning, thereby prompting and engendering interpretive responses.118

These two reality modes have been discussed in the introduction.

5. The facticity of mentation is the stratum of all things (kun-gzhi) and the eightfold cognitive ensemble (tshogs-brgyad). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is beyond the stratum of all things and the eightfold cognitive ensemble.

The fifth pair of contrasts has already been discussed in the section on mentation. 'Jigs-med gling-pa described excitatory intelligence as "not stirring up the waves of the eightfold cognitive ensemble".119

6. The facticity of mentation is chasing of duality of samsara ('khor-ba). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is the non-duality of nirvana (myan-'das).

The sixth contrast contains two of the most well-known Buddhist terms. Excitatory intelligence is "being beyond suffering and frustration" (mya-ngan-las 'das-pa or myang-'das as it is abbreviated), which is the translation of the Tibetan term for the Sanskrit "nirvana". Samsara, translated into Tibetan as ('khor-ba) means to go around in circles, which refers to being stuck in the uncomprehending repetition of habituated tendencies and rushing headlong from one situation into another. Nirvana is referred to as non-dual indicating that the splitting of the wholeness of experience by mentation does not obtain. Indeed the definition of a sentient being (sems-can), literally one who has sems, could be interpreted as one who is mentation governed. Both 'Jigs-med gling-pa and Yon-tan rgya-mtsho compared the subject\object dichotomy of mentation to a stake (rtod-bur) that restrains the open operation of excitatory intelligence. Thus the distinction between a ordinary sentient being (sems-can or lus-can [an embodied being]) and a "buddha" (sangs-rgyas) is not between two different classes of beings. Instead in the dissipation of obstacle (sangs) and the expansion (rgyas) of all that is positive, the restraining 'stake' of mentation is removed and the openness of the dynamic process of Being re-establishes itself. As 'Jigs-med gling-pa stated in quoting the Mu-tig phreng-ba:

If there is a disconnection from mentation,
obscurations dissipate and positivity
expands (sangs-rgyas-pa). All the dross of
embodied being is gone.120

The underlying dynamics that connect excitatory intelligence and mentation are further indicated in the seventh of the twelve contrasts.

7. The facticity of mentation is the outward directed glow of excitatory intelligence (rig-gdangs) being carried away by karmic motility (las-rlung). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is an auto-radiance, not carried away or coming or going.

The outwardly directed glow of excitatory intelligence is an important and unique contribution of rDzogs-chen thinking. In brief we can describe 'motility' (rlung) as energetic currents, which are both physical and psychic. 'Motility' can operate as the motility that is karmic action (las-rlung) associated with the conventional level (kun-rdzob) or as (ye-shes-kyi rlung), 'motility that is pristine cognitiveness' on the level of the ultimately valid (don-dam).121

8. The facticity of mentation is a put up job ('dus-byas) which is in the power of modifiers (rkyen). The facticity of excitatory intelligence is not fabricated or modified.

The term 'dus-byas indicates that which has been put together or constructed. In the Buddhist context, samsara is just this 'put-up job' which under the power of modifiers, undergoes change and may collapse at any moment. In contrast to the divisive conceptualizing of mentation, which divides up the wholeness of experience into the duality of subject and object, excitatory intelligence is not something adulterated. Indeed we might say that mentation is the messing up of the openness and radiance of excitatory intelligence.

9. The facticity of mentation is seen in relation to excitatory intelligence. The facticity of excitatory intelligence cannot be seen from the viewpoint of mentation.

In modern terms we might say that the lower level is seen in relation to the higher one, but that the operations of a higher level cannot be reduced to the lower level.

10. The facticity of mentation is a coming into presence (snang-ba) which seems to have an onset (skye) and ending (gags). The facticity of excitatory intelligence does not change into something else (pho) or transform (gyur).

This contrast indicates a general movement in rDzogs-chen thinking away from thinking in terms of entities, which seem to belong within a temporal sequence, that is, they come "into" existence at some point and pass "out" of existence at another. Buddhist thinkers also rejected the idea of an centre, whether this is conceived of as an individual "ego" or a universal atman that persists throughout transformation and changes.

11. The facticity of mentation is an obscuration (sgrib) that must be wiped out. The facticity of excitatory intelligence is the pristine cognitiveness (ye-shes) to be reached.

This contrast has already been discussed in Chapter Three.

12. The facticity of mentation is an incidental straying into divisive conceptualization. The facticity of excitatory intelligence is the primordial meaning-saturated gestalt.

While mentation is the deviation of intelligence that becomes trapped in divisive conceptualization, excitatory intelligence operates in the gestalt of meanings. The primordially of the meaning-saturated gestalt can be delineated as the insistence on the primacy of meaning-seeking as contrasted with the domain of "entities" and "meanings". In this sense the meaning-saturated gestalt is primordial because it predates the particular meaning and events that are dealt with on the level of mentation.

B) Translation from the Commentary to the Yon-tan Mdzod

To conclude this study we shall translate a portion of the commentary by Yon-tan rgya-mtsho on the pertinent verses of 'Jigs-med gling-pa's Yon-tan mdzod distinguishing mentation (sems) from excitatory intelligence (rig-pa).¹²² The root verses of the Yon-tan mdzod have already been translated in Chapter One of the present study. As well as helping to explicate this distinction, the translation also serves to display the structure and nature of indigenous Tibetan commentaries. Yon-tan rgya-mtsho's commentary is structured such that it incorporates the root verses of the Yon-tan mdzod one or more "words"¹²³ at a time. To indicate this feature in the translation, we have bold-faced the "words" from the original verses as they occur in the commentary.

In conclusion we can note that the great debt both Yon-tan rgya-mtsho and 'Jigs-med gling-pa owe to earlier thinkers is evident in the passage to be translated. Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa's summary dates back to the 14th century, but many of these same ideas are present in the early tantras of the rNying-ma tradition. It is beyond the scope of the present work to determine the earliest presentation of these key ideas. This undertaking would involve a critical reading of the earliest writings of the rDzogs-chen tradition and in particular the as yet little studied tantras of the rDzogs-chen tradition. For the purposes here we can note the indebtedness of later writers to the germinal insights of the earlier period. In addition we can suggest that further research into the early rDzogs-chen tantras, which have had not even the benefit of a critical edition, is essential for understanding the unique contributions of Tibetan thinkers.

The Translation

First an explanation of the meaning of the distinction between excitatory intelligence and mentation.¹²⁴

Those referred to are said to already fully understand (rtogs-pa). "Not understanding" means one hastens after duality. As to that termed "mentation" (sems), it is a fabricated aspect of the cognitivity of excitatory intelligence (rig-pa), which is lucent (gsal), involving a subjective grasping (dzin), through the activation of various experientially initiated programs of experience (bag-chags). From this arises the particular aspects of the subject/object duality (gzung-'dzin). Further, from the projects which elicit mentation, although there is nothing objectively there as a project, lucent presencing is taken as the presencing of the five fields of form, sound, smell, flavor and rapport. From the subjective grasping of mentation comes the presencing of karma and the maturation of innumerable emotional obscurations.

Excitatory intelligence is disconnected from this, open (stong), lucent (gsal) and not contrived (dus-ma-byas), in reach and range like the sky, completely beyond the misery of samsara, it abides in the manner of auto-effulgence which never ceases. From the Yid-bzhin rin-po-che'i mdzod:¹²⁵

The thrust towards optimization¹²⁶, from the timeless
beginning a sheer lucency ('od-gsal),
the very meaningfulness of the ground (don-gyi kun-gzhi), its
actuality is not contrived,
primordially pure in every aspect, like the sun in the sky.

Thus bringing one face to face with excitatory intelligence is the **distinguishing feature of the essence of rDzogs-chen (complete wholeness)**, for **those who understand** the mode of excitatory intelligence of the internal logic of Being (chos-nyid) the external objective domain, which cannot withstand investigation appears at that time as the frolicking of the creativity of excitatory intelligence. One is free from the subjective grasping of cognitivity, which is taken as the internality of mind. The teacher of the subject/object duality is toppled. One is free in the reach and range of **excitatory intelligence**, which is not something as such, from the totality of conditioned existence after karma and emotional obscurations have been dissolved. One has reached the level of the internal logic of Being where everything is over. This is what is said to be reaching in one's own lifetime the dynamic continuum of meaning as an informing hierarch (rgyal-po), the domain of Kun-tu bzang-po. From the Chos-dbying rin-po-che'i mdzod:127

When everything, all the mistaken notions of the inner and
outer domains,
cannot be objectified, like the sky, one reaches the
intentionality of the meaning-rich gestalt.
to arrive where everything has gone, with nothing to come or
go.
One has reached the supreme home of the continuum of
meaningfulness,
a vortex of loving kindness, the Kun-tu bzang-po realm.

Those who do **not understand** the excitatory intelligence of the internal logic of Being, through the arising from the all-ground (kun-gzhi) comes the presencing of the various "concrete things" which are seen to be the internal and the external, including mentation. That which is termed "**sentient being**" (sems-can) is the taking up of "self" and "other". Although there is no moving away from **just this**, the field of excitatory intelligence, it becomes through the all-ground, **the realm of samsara**. From the rTsal-rdzogs.128

The un-knowing fools of this realm try urgently to tie knots in
the sky.

Taking up presencing, which is not an objective presence,
they grasp as "self" and "other", that which does not exist as
"self" and "other".

V. FOOTNOTES

- 1 The full title is Yon-tan rin-po-che'i mdzod dga'-ba'i char. This text is found in The Collected Works of Kun-mkhyen 'jigs-med gling-pa. (Gangtok: Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab, vol. 30, 1971).
- 2 This study, available only in German, is: Die aus dem Chinesischen übersetzten Tibetischen Versionen des Suvarṇaprabhāsaśūtra, by Claus Oetke, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977).
- 3 Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 97.
- 4 Historical information is based upon Tucci's The Religions of Tibet and on the preface by E. Gene Smith to The Autobiographical Reminiscences of Ngag-dbang-dpal-bzang, (Gangtok: Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab, vol. 1, 1969). For a critical discussion of early Buddhism in Tibet that challenges the "official" account see "Early Forms of Tibetan Buddhism" by H.V. Guenther in Crystal Mirror, vol.3.
- 5 Guenther, H.V., "Early Forms of Tibetan Buddhism" in Crystal Mirror, vol. III (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1974), pp.80-92.
- 6 Dargyay, Eva, The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet.
- 7 A good introduction to the development of rNying-ma tradition is found in the preface by E. Gene Smith to The Autobiographical Reminiscences of Ngag-dbang-dpal-bzang, (Gangtok: Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab, Volume 1, 1969).

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- 8 See the account by Samten Gyaltzen Karmay in his PhD. thesis entitled Origin and Early Development of the Tibetan Religious Traditions of the Great Perfection (rDzogs-Chen), School of Oriental and African Studies, The University of London, 1987.
- 9 For an account of the development of major trends in Buddhist thinking from early schools of Buddhism to the advances of the rDzogs-chen school see Guenther, From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs-chen and the New Sciences of Mind. (New Science Library, Shambhala Publications, in press). This study traces the evolution of Buddhist thinking in terms of the developmental pathways and instability phases culminating in the rDzogs-chen tradition.
- 10 See Guenther, "The Old and the New Vision" in Erich Jantsch, ed. The Evolutionary Vision: Toward a Unifying Paradigm of Physical, Biological and Sociocultural Evolution. Boulder, Colorado: AAAS Selected Symposium 61, 1982.
- 11 This analogy has been suggested by Guenther, 1984. For more on dissipative structure see Prigogine and Stengers Order Out of Chaos (Bantam Books; Toronto, 1984).
- 12 This concern can be readily shown by the titles of the five earliest translation of rDzogs-chen (rDzogs chen snga 'gyur lnga):
- Byang chub sems bsgom pa
Byang chub sems rtsal chen sprugs pa
Byang chub sems rig pa khu byug
Byang chub sems khyung chen
Byang chub sems mi nub pa'i rgyud mthsan

For an account of these texts along with a translation of the first work, see Primordial Experience translated by Namkhai Norbu and Kennard Lipman.

- 13 For example see Junjiro Takakusu, The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy, p.21 or A.K. Warder's Indian Buddhism, p.94.
- 14 rDzogs pa chen po nges don 'dus pa'i rgyud by Vimalamitra, from the collection rNying-ma'i rgyud-'bum, Thimbu, 1973, Vol.7 pp.1-108.
- 15 Guenther, Matrix of Mystery, p.209, note 1.
- 16 Schrag, Calvin O., Experience and Being, p. 230.
- 17 Unfortunately little is known about Yon-tan rgya-mtsho, also known by the name Mkhan-po Yon-dga'. According to the introduction to the Yon-tan rin-po-che'i mdzod-kyi 'grel-pa nyi-zla'i sgron-me, Yon-tan rgya-mtsho was a slightly senior contemporary to Gzhan-phan-chos-kyi-s nang-ba or Gzhan-dga' (1871- 1927). This would place him in the latter half of the 19th century. We also know that he studied with dPal-sprul O-rgyan-'jigs-med-chos-kyi-dbang-pa (also known as dPal-sprul, born 1808).
- 18 The full title is Yon-tan rin-po-che'i mdzod dga'-ba'i char. This text is found in The Collected Works of Kun-mkhyen 'jigs-med gling-pa, (Gangtok: Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab, vol. 30, 1971). 'jigs-med gling-pa also wrote a two volume commentary on this root text, the Bden-gnyis shing-rta, (A commentary on Chapters 1- 9 of the Yon-tan mdzod) and the rNam-mkhyen shing-rta (A commentary on Chapters 10 - 13). Both commentaries can be found in The

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- Collected Works of Kun-mkhyen 'jigs-med gling-pa, (Gangtok: Ngayur Nyingmay Sungrab, vols. 29 & 30, 1971).
- 19 dPal-sprul O-rgyan 'jigs-med chos kyi dbang-po Yon-tan mdzod kyi spyi-don sa-bcad rgyas bsdus mtshams-ba 'bring-po ltar byas-pa, in his The Collected Works of dPal-sprul, vol. 2.
- 20 J Historical information is drawn from Eva Dargyay's The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet, as well as from Sonam T. Kazi's introduction to the Ngayur Nyingmay Sungrab Series, Volume 26.
- 21 A translation and commentary on the Sems-nyid Ngal-gso has been written by Guenther entitled Kindly Bent to Ease Us. Part One: Mind (Dharma Publishing; Emeryville, California, 1975).
- 22 See for example Steiner, George After Babel (London: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- 23 A full account of the "fore-structure" of interpretation occurs in Martin Heidegger's Being and Time, pp.188-195, in which Heidegger argues that an interpretation "is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us" (pp.191-192). Rather interpretation is always grounded in a) fore-having - interpretation occurs within a totality of involvements, b) fore-sight - that which makes the distinction within what we have in advance with a view towards a definite way in which this can be interpreted, and c) fore-conception - which "has already decided for a definite way of conceiving it, either with finality or with reservation."(p191)

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- 24 It must be noted here that Heidegger's later thinking somewhat challenges this earlier formulation by suggesting that every "granting" of Being is in the same way a concealing, in the sense that Being is taken in a way which bars others. In this regard we can may see how Heidegger's later thinking touches on the "mystery" of Being. As Kockelmans states: "(Being)...is that which hides itself when it grants itself such that beings may be what they are in truth". On the Truth of Being, p. 48
- 25 Heidegger, Being and Time, p.195.
- 26 Gadamer, Hans-Georg, Truth and Method.
- 27 Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 350.
- 28 This was first stressed by F.S.C. Northrop in The Meeting of East and West.
- 29 Warder, A.K., Indian Buddhism, p.36.
- 30 For a discussion of the problem of empiricism in the context of western philosophy see "Empiricism" by D. W. Hamlyn in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press), pp.499 - 505.
- 31 Northrop, F.S.C., The Meeting of East and West.
- 32 Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 102.
- 33 Ricoeur, Paul, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, p. 115.
- 34 Heidegger, Identity and Difference, p. 23.
- 35 Gilbert Ryles's The Concept of Mind, which draws on and develops the linguistic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, is perhaps the most widely acknowledged philosophical critique of the manifold problems associated with the concept of mind. On the

psychological side, J.Z. Young in Programs of the Brain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) admits that "(mind) ...is really at best a vague concept", p.216.

36 Guenther, Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice, p. 13.

37 According to the Yid-bzhin-mdzod-kyi grub-mtha' bsdus-pa (p. 951 ff.) by Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (a summary of philosophical views as presented in kLong-chen rab-'byams-pa's Yid-bzhin rin-po-che'i mdzod), the Vaibhāṣikas grouped the knowable (shes-bya) under five headings:

i. What we would consider the physical-material but which is strictly speaking form or pattern (as in a coloured patch). Here the four elementary functions of solidity, cohesion, temperature and movements as cause give rise to the five senses on one side and the five sense objects on the other.

ii. Mind (sems).

iii. Mental events (sems-byung) including the five ever-present events, five object determined functions, eleven positive functions that aid one in understanding, six basic emotions that throw one off track, twenty subsidiary emotions that continue this deviation, and four variables of mental functioning.

iv. Twenty three entities that do not fit into either the mental or formal categories, including such diverse topics as force, letters, transitoriness.

v. The three persisting elements (absolutes).

See the translation of this text in Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice.

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- 38 Yid-bzhin-mdzod-kyi grub-mtha' bsdus-pa by Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal rgya-mtsho, p.951.
- 39 See Guenther, Buddhist Philosophy In Theory and Practice (Penguin Books; Baltimore, 1972), p. 36.
- 40 A full account of mind and mental events is found in Guenther, Herbert V. and Kawamura, Leslie S., Mind in Buddhist Psychology, (Dharma Publishing; Emeryville, California, 1975).
- 41 Yid-bzhin-mdzod-kyi grub-mtha' bsdus-pa, p. 952.
- 42 Abhidharmakośa, II, verse 23. Tibetan translation.
- 43 As Louis de La Vallée Poussin reports:

La pensee est nommee citta parce qu'elle accumule (cinoti); elle set nommee manas parce qu'elle connait (manute); elle est nommee vijñāna parce qu'elle distingue son object (alambanam vijanati).

- L'Abhidharmakosa de Vasubandhu translated and annotated by Louis de La Vallée Poussin, (Institut Belge Des Etudes Chinoises; Bruxelles, 1971), p. 177.
- 44 Abhidharmakośa, II, 34a.
- 45 Guenther, From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs-chen and the New Science of Mind (New Science Library, in press).
- 46 For further details see Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma, Herbert V. Guenther (Shambhala Publications; Berkeley and London, 1976).
- 47 Yid-bzhin-mdzod-kyi grub-mtha' bsdus-pa, p. 964.

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- 48 For a discussion of the noetic and noematic aspects of experience in the context of the development of phenomenology see Experimental Phenomenology by Don Ihde (G.P. Putnam's Sons; New York, 1977).
- 49 Yon-tan rgya-mtsho, Yon-tan rin-po-che'i mdzod-kyi 'grel-pa zab-don snang-byed nyi-ma'i 'od-zer (hereafter Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer), p. 433.
- 50 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, Phenomenology of Perception, translated by Colin Smith (Routledge & Kegan Paul; London and Henly, 1962), pp.70-71.
- 51 The Tibetan interpretation of the term kun-gzhi is a complex issue that could involve a major study alone. The rNying-ma interpretation is distinctly different from interpretations offered by other schools. On this issue, see Guenther's Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice. In general the Sanskrit term ālaya-vijñāna when used in the Indian Yogācāra schools, was interpreted as presenting the possibility for a change in aspects (rnam-gyur) but not for a complete transformation (gnas-gyur). To account for the transformation in which a new "Buddha- structure" was produced, the idea of amala-vijñāna was produced. The term kun-gzhi as interpreted by rNying-ma and rDzogs-chen thinkers would incorporate the idea of amala-vijñāna, which presents the possibility of complete change in status, not merely in looks.
- 52 Here used in Heidegger's sense of "prejudice". See Section "B) The Hermeneutic Approach" in the introductory chapter.

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- 53 Matson, Wallace, "Why Isn't the Mind-Body Problem Ancient?" in Mind, Matter and Method: Essays in Philosophy and Science in Honor of Herbert Feigl, ed. Paul Feyerabend and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis, 1966) pp.92-102.
- 54 See Clapp, James Gordon, "Locke" in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1967).
- 55 Descartes, Descartes' Philosophical Writings, Selected and translated by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1952), p.129.
- 56 For a critique see Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature.
- 57 Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, p. 6.
- 58 For an overview of modern work in this area with an account of the "hermeneutic" approach see "Studying Cognition Today" by Daniel Andler in Eidos, Vol. 5, No. 2, December, 1986. For the relationship between the "hermeneutic" approach and the philosophical approach termed "hermeneutic" see "Experimental Epistemology: Background and Future" by Francisco J. Varela, in the same volume of Eidos.
- 59 Dasgupta, Surendranath A History of Indian Philosophy, Volume I, p. 75.
- 60 Maturana, Humberto and Varela, Francisco, The Tree of Knowledge (New Science Library; Boston and London, 1987).
- 61 See Guenther, H.V., Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice, Chapter IV.

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- 62 See Lipman, K., "The Cittamatra and its Madhyamika critique: Some phenomenological reflections" in Philosophy East and West, 32, no.3 (July, 1982).
- 63 For the purposes of our analysis we will over look the fact that the Mādhyamika school has at least two important sub- divisions: the Svātantrikas and the Prāsangikas.
- 64 The term "dependent co-origination" is taken from Frederick Streng's Emptiness. See Chapter Four of this work for a detailed account of this explanatory principle.
- 65 Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer, p. 20.
- 66 What we have termed the "model-building" (kun-rdzob), can also be termed the "conventionally accepted". One translation, "model-building", stresses the creative side of this activity which produces models and procedures to identify and co-ordinate various projects. The other, "conventionally accepted", stresses the fact that these models (or perhaps "language games") have a consensually validated status and are only provisional or relative to particular projects.
- 67 See Guenther, The Creative Vision, pp. viii-xiv.
- 68 Yon-tan mdzod, Chapter 12, p. 101.
- 69 Bodhicaryavatara, chapter nine, verse two.
- 70 Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer, p.20.
- 71 Häberlin, Paul, Philosophia Perennis, (Berlin: Springer- Verlag, 1952). This work has, by some oversight, not been translated into English. I have relied on the impromptu translation of Dr. Guenther.

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- 72 Since ontological difference is a theme expressed in many variations throughout Heidegger's work, any account of his "results" that can be useful for our purposes here must necessarily be a generalization and simplification of a whole path of thinking. For a general discussion of "ontological difference" as it figures in the course of Heidegger's thinking see, L.M. Vail Heidegger and Ontological Difference (The Pennsylvania State University Press; University Park and London, 1972).
- 73 See Matrix of Mystery, p.5.
- 74 Matrix of Mystery, p.198.
- 75 See Harrison, Edward, Masks of the Universe, p. 1 ff.
- 76 We have translated kun-gyi gzhi as "inclusive ground" not "ground of all" or "all-ground" since the term kun has the implication of "totality" but not just in the sense of indicating all members of a set of objects or things. This latter sense would be indicated if instead of kun the term thams-cad, meaning everything, was used by rDzogs-chen thinkers. Kun has much more the association of "whole" or "nothing left out".
- 77 For a full account of stong-gsal and the indivisibility of these notions, see Matrix of Mystery, pp. 48 - 54.
- 78 Guenther, Matrix of Mystery, p.7ff.
- 79 See Matrix of Mystery, pp.8 ff. For an account of the rDzogs-chen understanding of the dynamic processes of Being see also the papers by Herbert V. Guenther; "The Dynamics of Being: rDzogs-chen Process Thinking" (Canadian Tibetan Studies vol. 1, Occasional

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- Papers published by the Society for Tibetan Studies; Calgary, 1983)
and "Being's Vitalizing Core Intensity" (Ref ?).
- 80 Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer, p 433.
- 81 Vail, L.M., Ontological Difference, pp.14-15.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Davies, P.C.W., in Space and time in the modern universe
(Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 136.
- 84 Streng, Frederick J., in Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning
(Nashville, Tennessee; The Abingdon Press, 1967) p.152.
- 85 For a discussion of the role of language in rDzogs-chen thinking see
Guenther, "Being's Vitalizing Core Intensity".
- 86 see Kofman, Sarah "Metaphor, Symbol, Metamorphosis" in The New
Nietzsche edited by David B. Allison (The MIT Press; Cambridge,
Mass., 1985).
- 87 See Johnson, Mark, The Body in the Mind (The University of
Chicago Press; Chicago and London, 1987).
- 88 Ibid, p. xiii.
- 89 Levin, David Michael, The Body's Recollection of Being (Routledge
& Kegan Paul; London, 1985).
- 90 For a lucid discussion of the inadequacies of the "objectivist"
position see Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors We Live By.
- 91 The translation of these three terms is taken from Guenther. See,
for example, his Matrix of Mystery.
- 92 Being and Time p. 174.
- 93 Jantsch, Erich, The Self-Organizing Universe, pp.49-50.
- 94 Guenther, Matrix of Mystery.

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- 95 Yon-tan mdzod, p.102.
- 96 Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer, p.433.
- 97 For further information see Guenther, Kindly Bent to Ease Us: Part One, p.261, note 8.
- 98 Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer, pp.432-436.
- 99 See Chapter 4 of the Yon-tan mdzod.
- 100 Bohm, David and Peat, F. David, Science, Order, and Creativity (Bantam Books; Toronto, 1987).
- 101 See for example Hayward, Jeremy, Shifting Worlds. Changing Minds: Where the Sciences and Buddhism Meet (New Science Library, Shambhala; Boston & London, 1987).
- 102 For example Zukav, Gary, The Dancing Wu Li Masters (Morrow; New York, 1979); Capra, Fritjof, The Tao of Physics (Shambhala; Berkeley, 1975).
- 103 Herbert, Nick, Quantum Reality (Anchor Books; Garden City, New York, 1987).
- 104 Ibid. p. 248-250.
- 105 Mu-tig phreng-ba vol II, 570.
- 106 rNam-mkhyen shing-rta, p.637.
- 107 rNam-mkhyen shing-rta, p. 638.
- 108 Chos-dbyings rin-po-che'i mdzod. Ed. Dodrup Chen Rinpoche, Chapter 10, verse 39.
- 109 Nyi-ma'i 'od-zer, p.433.
- 110 Yon-tan mdzod, p.101.
- 111 In volume II of rNying-ma'i rgyud bcu-bdun (New Delhi, 1973-77), p.570.

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- 112 Mu-tig phreng-ba, in rNying-ma rgyud bcu-bdun, vol. II, p.444.
- 113 From Theg-pa chen-po'i man-ngag-gi bstan-bcos yid-bzhin rin-po-che'i mdzod, chapter 1, verse 3.
- 114 Guenther, Matrix of Mystery, Chapter Two.
- 115 Bla-ma Yang-tig p.442.
- 116 See Lipman and Norbu, Primordial Experience, p.xix.
- 117 rNam-mkhyen shing-rta, p. 638.
- 118 Matrix of Mystery, p.3.
- 119 rNam-mkhyen shing-rta, p. 637.
- 120 rNam-mkhyen shing-rta, p. 637, quote from the Mu-tig phreng-ba.
- 121 On these difficult terms see Guenther, Kindly Bent to Ease Us, Part Two: Meditation (Dharma Press; Emeryville, California, 1976).
- 122 The translation is from the commentary by Yon-tan rgya-mtsho, the Yon-tan mdzod-kyi 'grel-pa nyi-zla'i sgron-me, Volume Two entitled, Zab-don snang-byed nyi-ma'i-'od-zer, reproduced by Sonam T. Kazi (Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrub series, Volume 27: Gangtok, 1971). The translated section occurs in Chapter Twelve, pages 432 - 437.
- 123 We say "words" since grammatically speaking the Tibetan language is made up of units which may be combined to form larger units of meaning. Thus "word" is only an analogy which does not do full justice to how the Tibetan language is actually structured.
- 124 The distinction between excitatory intelligence and mentation is the first of ten distinctions proposed by Yon-tan rgya-mtsho, which are important for understanding the uniqueness of rDzogs-chen thinking. The other distinctions are: gnas-pa/ngo-bo; 'phro-ba/rtsal; grol-

tshul/gnad; kun-gzhi/chos-sku; 'khrul/grol-skabs; gzhi-'bras/lhun-grub;
lam-'bras/ka-dag; bar-do/lha; dbugs-'byin/zhing. See pp.432ff.

125 Chapter 1, lines 9-11.

126 bde-gshegs-snying-pa. For an explanation of this term see Guenther,
"Being's Vitalizing Core Intensity", p.87.

127 Chapter 10, 39D.

128 Seng-ge rtsal-rdzogs chen-po'i rgyud, in rNying-ma'i rgyud bcu-bdun
(New Delhi, 1973-1977), Vol. II, p. 314.

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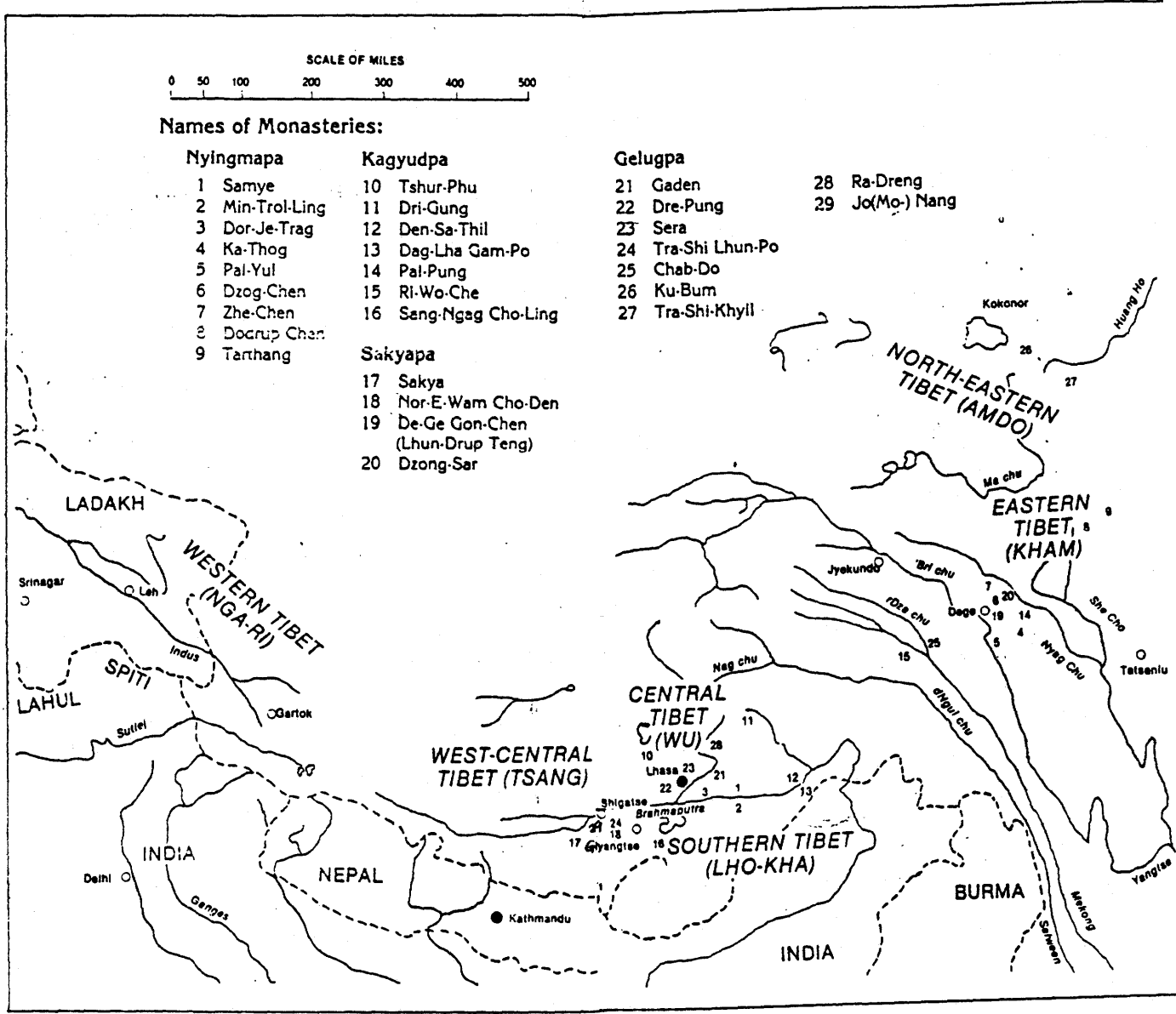


Figure 1. Buddhist monasteries in Tibet. (From Tulku Thondup, Buddhist Civilization in Tibet, Cambridge, U.S.A.: Maha Siddha Nyingmapa Center, 1982).